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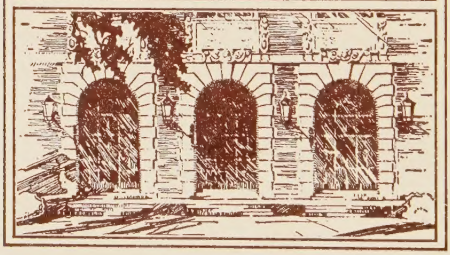

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PLAYS OF OUR FOREFATHERS

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PLAYS OF OUR FOREFATHERS

AND SOME OF THE TRADITIONS UPON WHICH THEY WERE FOUNDED

BY

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PREFACE

I HAVE hoped that the reading public might be interested in the mediæval drama, not only as an instance of the development of literary art, but as a chronicle of the ideals and traditions, the religious consciousness, the romance and humour of times that seem to be remote, but after all are modern in a myriad surprising ways, and human to the core. To laugh and weep, to worship and to revel for a season, in the manner and spirit of our ancestors, were infinitely more pleasing than the pride of controversy or the pursuit of scientific ends. If I have sometimes used mere reverence, fellow-feeling, and imagination to reconstruct these plays and times, I trust the scholar will sympathise and condone; if I have in places turned source-hunter and advocate, I know the genial reader will skip.

My indebtedness to authorities is, I think, sufficiently indicated in the body of the book. For the preparation of the index I take great pleasure in expressing my obligation to my former pupil and present colleague, Mr. G. A. Smithson, of the University of California.

BERKELEY, July 20, 1907.

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PLAYS OF OUR FOREFATHERS

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGIN OF THE MEDIÆVAL DRAMA

When, in the earlier centuries of the Christian era, the law and order, the social forms, refinement, and art of classical civilisation were submerged by the flood of barbaric invasion, it was only natural that the ancient drama should likewise disappear. Greek tragedy had, indeed, long ago degenerated into rhetoric and ethical bombast; and Roman comedy had yielded, as a popular amusement, to the brutal and spectacular orgies of the Coliseum, the obscenities and ineptitudes of dancers, mimics, and jugglers. But among the cultivated the masterpieces themselves were still a source of delight, and might yet, had Roman civilisation been suffered to work out its own reform, have served as models for the recrudescence of the ancient stage. Under the barbarian rulers of the dismembered empire, they persisted merely as manuscripts in one and another ecclesiastical library or religious muniment-room of Europe.

But the dramatic instinct of mankind survives its products. It is perennial: when thwarted here it bubbles

elsewhere unexpected. For as it is innate in man to imitate, so especially to imitate the actions and passions of man. In the folk-festivals of our Norse and Teutonic ancestors, and in the lays of the mediæval minstrel, the desire for dramatic representation struggled for an outlet; it found expression, crude and lewd and personal, in those survivals of the southern mime which lent sporadic laughter to the merry-makings of castle and court all through the ages known as dark and mediæval; it posed sincere, ascetic, awkward, in the dramatic offspring of the humanist, when now and again some cloistered devotee of Æschylus, Euripides, or Terence sought to inspire his pagan models with the breath of Christian belief, or to convert the material of the classics into modern incident, character, and device. Plautus (in whose comedies, with those of Terence, St. Jerome was wont to seek refreshment after strenuous seasons of fasting and prayer) was imitated in a *Querolus*, and probably in a *Geta*, as early as the fourth century. Terence, the dear delight of the mediæval monastery, was in the tenth pruned of his pagan charm and naughtiness, and planted out in six persimmon comedies by a Saxon nun of Gandersheim, Hrosvitha, — comedies of tedious saints and hircine sinners and a stuffy Latin style. And in that same century a tragedy of the *Suffering Christ* was patched up of lines from Æschylus and Euripides. This is the Χρίστος πάσχων long attributed to Gregory Nazianzene, but now assigned by scholars to Johannes Tzetzes, some six hundred years later, or to some other Snug or Rowley of the time. But this lacked body as those artistic flavour. All are *réchauffés*.

Neither the lingering rites of a decadent superstition,

such as furnished forth the festivals of Saxon spring and harvest, nor lifeless adaptation of the classics, could satisfy the dramatic instinct of a civilisation groping, to be sure, but none the less advancing, toward an ideal of richer content, religious and social. To be effective, vital, drama must represent spiritual conflict or the jostle of social adjustment. The former kind of play is tragedy; the latter, comedy. Just as Greek tragedy was religious in its matter, essence, and aim, so must the tragedy of early Christian civilisation, if it is to endure, have its germ and spiritual effect in things religious. As the plays of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides sprang from myths of conduct, aspiration, mystery, — the Promethean struggle with destiny, the Dionysiac quest of immortality, the Heraclean assertion of man's ideal strength; the conflict of law, human and divine, in Antigone, of love and life in Alcestis, of lust and chastity in Hippolytus, — so must the tragedy of the new era have its roots in the springs of Christian feeling: it must breathe the air of Christian ritual; flower in Christian legend, scripture, romance; have its fruitage in ideals of conduct characteristic of a Christian age. As the dramatic spectacle of the Greek, dealing with mysteries of the religious life, aimed to transmute that Fear of the unknown, which gripes the untutored heart, into a reverent resignation to the inevitable, and to substitute for the hopeless Pity aroused by unmerited suffering the consolation of frailty and innocence triumphant over mortality, — so must the drama of God-in-man, the tragedy of a human Saviour, purify mankind not by terror of retribution from without, but by fear of God within the heart; not alone by pity for sorrows inexplicable and intimate, but by sympathy with the suffering brotherhood of man. What Christian-

ity teaches, the tragedy of a Christian civilisation must present in the symbolic form of actual lives, characters, and conflicts: inward righteousness, outward charity.

And as the comedy, too, of Greeks and Romans showed that not all mistakes in social conduct are necessarily fatal, and not all apparent successes final, so the comedy of a Christian age must show how in the realm of convention the joyous heart may triumph over untoward circumstance; how wit and humour, sharp-shooters of the band of Mirth, may rout battalions of ignorance and sham and self-conceit. Indeed, we should expect to find that in the drama of the Christian religion, where mercy tempers justice, Fear and Hope shall meet together, Pity and Mirth shall kiss each other. And our expectation will not be disappointed.

It was not until the church of the Dark Ages had begun to emphasise in its religious functions the dramatic element lying at the core of its ritual and its faith, and to realise that the latter could be best inculcated by dramatising the former, — the faith emphasised by staging the ritual, — it was not until then that the modern drama was born. This has been said by hundreds. In what follows let me, for the sake of brevity, quote:

"The climax of a tragedy in life was [from the first] recognised in the marvellous self-sacrifice of Christ. Around the Eucharist, the memorial of thanksgiving for that death and resurrection, grew up the Christian worship. As a fit approach to that solemn feast, various acts of preparation were introduced, until, as a result, an established mode of procedure, a formal liturgy, expressed the devotion of the disciple not less by action than by word."[1] But, so long as the feast remained a

[1] Davidson: English Mystery Plays, p. 6.

mere memorial, a thanksgiving, purely symbolical, the element capable of arousing "dramatic" emotion was lacking; for dramatic emotion centres not about a memory, a doctrine, an idea, but about an action, a suffering, a Presence. If the illusion of another's agony is presented as real and immediate, the onlooker, by sympathetically re-enacting in his own imagination that agony, feels the pity and the fear that are distinctively tragic. When in the ninth century, by the formulation of the doctrine of transubstantiation, the bread and wine of the Eucharist came more generally to be regarded as the real body and blood of Christ, no longer a mere memorial, but a sacrifice for our sins, then began "the dramatic devolopment of the liturgy in all countries of the Roman Catholic faith. This is more than coincidence," continues the writer. "It is cause and effect. The dramatic element, hitherto lacking in the Christian liturgy, was now present through a belief that aroused the most intense emotions in the worshipper. Day after day the devout among the clergy saw the Son of God offered up, a present sacrifice for their sins. What act of more awful import could be imagined! And when the church services, following the incidents of his life, came around to the dates of his death and resurrection, what longing must have possessed them to present vividly to the ignorant and heedless multitude those moments now stored for them with such sacred meaning!"

Once the idea of impressing the public mind by means of dramatic representation with the significance of any portion of the church ritual had taken root, its branching and flowering were but a question of opportunity and constructive imagination. The opportunity was at hand in the succession of holy days appointed to be observed

by the ecclesiastical calendar; while the scriptures appointed to be read for the various fasts and festivals of the year, as well as the legends of the saints celebrated on their respective days, afforded such material for imaginative elaboration as the meanest invention could not fail to grasp, or succeed utterly in spoiling. The materials, moreover, whether biblical or legendary, were already a property of the popular consciousness; just as the myths out of which Athenian tragedy had proceeded were familiar in plot, character, and sentiment because transmitted as articles of belief for generations before they became articles of dramatic edification.

The four Sundays in Advent, of which the first would fall between November 27 and December 3, set before the church the majesty of the person and of the kingdom of the coming Lord; to the creative imagination they offered alluring material for dramatic treatment: Christ riding into Jerusalem upon the ass, and cleansing the Temple of its money-changers; the healing of the lepers and the restoring of sight to the blind; the ministry of John bearing witness, and of Elijah and the prophets; the mystery of the Second Coming, "The Kingdom of God is nigh at hand"; the parable of the Virgins wise and foolish, with its thrilling cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh"; the rehearsal of the signs that shall precede the last Judgment, and the lurid history of the Man of Sin, — the Antichrist whose name and threatened reign were facts that gripped the mediæval heart with dread. The numerous legendary festivals of this season were regarded by the common folk as a foretaste of the revels of Christmas; they afforded in themselves a varied fabric for literary or processional commemoration. St. Cecilia's, St. Clement's, St.

Catherine's, St. Andrew's, crowded the end of November; and St. Nicholas' and St. Lucy's, together with that greater festival of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin, gave colour to the opening weeks of the month following. The first of these December feasts, that of St. Nicholas on the sixth, afforded especial provocation to the lovers of dramatic entertainment. For on that day fell the election in many schools and church-choirs of the Boy Bishop; and there, ready to the hand of clerical playwrights and mimetic boys, were legends, unsurpassed for wit and wonder, of the patron saint of schoolboys and of travellers whom schoolboys always love. St. Thomas' day on the twenty-first would revive the story of his incredulity. The twenty-fifth with the Nativity of our Lord, the twenty-sixth with the martyrdom of St. Stephen, the twenty-seventh with the devoted service and miraculous escapes of St. John the Beloved, and the twenty-eighth with the massacre of the Holy Innocents, could not escape dramatic celebration. The last, or Childermas, was, moreover, the special day of the Boy Bishop, and concluded the period of his rule.

January opens with the Circumcision of our Lord; Twelfth Day, or Old Christmas, follows on the sixth, and presents the Epiphany of Christ to the Gentiles, the beautiful story of the Star and the manifestation of the Babe to the three kings of Orient. On the first Sunday after Epiphany the gospel commemorates the manifestation of our Lord's glory in the Temple, his dispute with the Doctors; and on the second Sunday there is read the beginning of his miracles at the marriage of Cana in Galilee. Passing minor festivals, though one and another, like St. Fabian's and St. Agnes', had its processions and plays,

we come finally, on the twenty-fifth, to the Conversion of St. Paul, which of course found expression in many an early play.

With Candlemas on the second of February comes the festival of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, and there is recalled to memory the rejoicing of the aged Simeon and Anna for the light that should lighten the Gentiles. Then between the fourth of that month and the tenth of March, with Ash Wednesday begins the Lenten observance of the fasting in the wilderness and the temptation by the devil, a subject for many a miracle play. During March, St. David in Wales, and St. Patrick in Ireland, would doubtless be celebrated by pomp if not by plays. On the twenty-fifth of the month the story of the angelic messenger and the Annunciation stood ready to the poet's hand. Between March 15 and April 18, the sixth Sunday in Lent calls nowadays for the narrative of the last days of the Passion and the tragedy of the Crucifixion, but in the ancient English Church the Benediction of the Palms took place before the Holy Communion, with plain reference to the commemoration of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem: "And much people took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." After an acolyte had read the lesson of the encampment of the Israelites by the palm trees of Elim, and a deacon that of the triumphal entry from St. John, palm branches were laid upon the altar, for the exorcism and blessing of the priest; then the procession passed round the church, singing Hosannas and distributing the branches. From this service and celebration on the first day of Holy Week it was an easy

A Scene of Torture in a Passion Play, from a picture by Albrecht Dürer

From "A History of Theatrical Art"

and inevitable step to the dramatisation of the scriptural event.

Every day of Holy Week affords by its lessons and gospel distinctive material for the Drama of the Passion. Scene follows scene in cumulative series, — the conspiracy of the Jews, the anointing by the Magdalene, the betrayal, the institution of the Lord's Supper on Maundy Thursday, the culminating tragedy of Good Friday. Then the dramatic rebound, with the harrowing of hell, and the conversion of tragedy into comedy divine with the triumph of the Resurrection, and the various appearances of the risen Master to the Maries and the disciples.

Easter falls between March 22 and April 25; but always on April 23 a pleasing diversion of interest from the scriptural to the popular and patriotic would be created by the festival of St. George, about whose legend many a play and mumming was devised. Forty days after Easter — somewhere, that is, between April 30 and June 3 — the services of Holy Thursday would recall the glorious mystery of the Ascension; and ten days later the gospel of Whitsunday would suggest, as it still does in Florence and many another Italian town, the representation of the descent of the Holy Ghost. We read that in the middle of the sixteenth century at Whitsuntide, in St. Paul's Cathedral, they still symbolised the marvel "by letting a white pigeon fly out of a hole in the midst of the roof of the great aisle. The pigeon, with a long censer which came down from the same place almost to the ground, was swung up and down at such a length that it reached with one sweep almost to the west gate of the church, and with the other to the choir stairs; the censer breathing out over the whole church and the

assembled multitude a most pleasant perfume from the sweet things that burnt within it."[1] May 3 commemorates the invention of the Holy Cross, but no play that I know of grew out of that legend. The significance of Trinity Sunday — one week after Whitsunday — commemorating as it does a dogma rather than an historical event, does not lend itself to dramatic presentation. But the festival of Corpus Christi on the succeeding Thursday (*i. e.* between May 21 and June 24), even though it also celebrates a dogma, that of the Real Presence of our Lord in the consecrated host, became, soon after it was confirmed by Clement V in 1311, the occasion of most of the cyclic performances of England. For the doctrine of transubstantiation is in its essence materialistic, and the purpose of the Corpus Christi procession was from the first to awaken dramatic interest in the Holy Wafer, elevated every Sunday at the most solemn and thrilling moment of the mass, and borne through the streets once a year to be adored by attendant guilds and expectant crowds of citizens. About this, the central doctrine of a Christianity made material, the pageants of all sacred narrative might, and did, readily cluster.

The offices for the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, June 24, and for the ministration and martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul, June 29; also for various festivals of July, that of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Elizabeth on the second, of St. Margaret on the twentieth, St. Mary Magdalene on the twenty-second, and St. James the Greater (of Compostella) on the twenty-fifth, were all suggestive of incidents, scrip-

[1] Lombarde, Topographical Dictionary, *c.* 1570; in Hone's *Ancient Mysteries*.

tural or legendary, capable of histrionic treatment. But of July festivals, that which was destined to be of most importance in the history of the English drama was St. Anne's of the twenty-sixth; for, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the cyclic plays (especially those dealing with the tradition of the Virgin) of several English towns were transferred to that day as preferable to the day of Corpus Christi. In August the scriptural narrative again is illustrated by the festival of the Transfiguration on the sixth, and that of the beheadal of St. John the Baptist on the twenty-ninth; while the traditional history of the church is perpetuated in the festivals of St. Lawrence and St. Bartholomew. Interesting subjects, though I know of no liturgical plays or later miracles founded upon them, are commemorated in September, by the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on the fourteenth, by St. Matthew's day on the twenty-first, and St. Cyprian's (the *Cyprianus ad leones* of the Decian persecution) on the twenty-sixth. The festivals, on the other hand, of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, the eighth, and of St. Michael and All Angels, the twenty-ninth, undoubtedly contributed, the former to the development of the St. Anne plays, the other to the dramatisation of the legend of the war in heaven, and of the several scriptures and traditions, like that of Tobit, in which angelic presences ministered to man.

Though many saints are celebrated in October, — St. Remi, St. Faith, St. Denys, King Edward the Confessor, St. Etheldreda, St. Luke, Sts. Simon and Jude, and St. Crispin, — only the last of these, the shoemaker, and his brother Crispinian, seem to have received dramatic honours north of the English Channel. As patrons of

the gentle craft the twain were revered by every shoemaker; but the feast of their martyrdom, the twenty-fifth of the month, was celebrated with especial zest in Dublin, of which city they were the tutelar saints. Concerning Edward the Confessor, though he is preëminently the national saint of England, plays do not appear to have been made; but pageants in his honour upon his day, October 13, are of frequent record. Of the individual saints of the first three weeks in November, Martin, Bishop and Confessor, the beloved of beggars, who covered the shivering Lord with half of his cloak, is alone provocative of dramatic idealisation. But even that honour he appears with characteristic modesty to have declined; so we know him best by homely associations, those of Old New Year's day, — Martlemas beef, and apples and goodies for children. The distinctive festival of the month is that of All Saints, or Hallowmas, — in its universal commemoration of martyrs one of the most beautiful, in its forecast of the Day of Doom the most awful, in the calendar of the church. The epistle for the day is fraught with dramatic significance. It is of the sealing of the servants of God, of them which have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; it emphasises the happier side of the general doom. This side the mediæval playwrights did not utterly neglect; its dark counterpart is prominent in the miracle of the *Judicium* with which the great religious cycles close.

Most of these festivals, in spite of their different degrees of antiquity, have given impetus to some pageant or other of the cyclic miracles by which the drama was revived for the populace of the middle ages; or they

The End of the World

have contributed both material and occasion to one or another of the numerous independent plays of saints, of which, though few have survived, records remain in municipal documents or in literary reference at the present day.

CHAPTER II

THE EVOLUTION OF LITURGICAL PLAYS

From the Resurrection Trope

As in the liturgy the germ of dramatic development rests in the sacrifice of the mass, so in the calendar of the church the dramatic climax is reached on Good Friday with the gospel of our Lord's death upon the cross. For that most solemn of events in human history the agony of the preceding days of Holy Week has been a cumulative preparation, and of that Sacrifice the triumph of Easter is the only compensatory, the divinely dramatic, outcome. From the ceremonies attending the rituals of these days — Good Friday and Easter — and from the tropes, by which in simple dialogue the words of the scriptural participants were distributed among the officiating priests, the first great dramas of our forefathers sprang. The crucifixion itself was in earlier days regarded as too sacred and painful a subject to admit of active representation; but with the joyful theme of Christ's resurrection the case was altogether different; and the ritual dialogue of the Easter celebration was consequently the first to take on dramatic accessories and form. There had been, indeed, as Mr. Chambers, in his admirable work upon the "Mediæval Stage," [1] points out, dramatic arrangement of ceremonial processions at a very early date. When, for instance, the clergy were about

[1] Vol. II, pp. 4–67.

to dedicate a church, they would form in rank and approach it, singing, "Lift up your gates, O ye rulers, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." From within there would issue a scornful voice asking, "Who is this King of Glory?" — as from an evil spirit, say, some malign and lingering deity of pagan cult, — "Who is this King of Glory?" Whereat the ranks of the christian God would thunder in reply, "The Lord of Virtues; he is the King of Glory." And then the doors of the church would be flung open, and, "as the procession swept through, he who had been concealed within would slip out, *quasi fugiens*, to join the train,"— the ceremonial counterpart, this fugitive, of the folk-gods, or devils, which writhe in gargoyles of stone from under the eaves of mediæval convent, church, and college. From early times the ritual of divine service had indulged in dramatic illustration: the mimetic dropping of the Lenten veil at the words of the scripture, "The veil of the temple was rent in twain"; and the washing of feet on Maundy Thursday, and the parting of the seamless vestment on Good Friday, and so on.

From the *Concordia Regularis* of St. Ethelwold, drawn up between 965 and 975 for ceremonials of the church in Winchester, we still possess a description of the most dramatic of these early rituals, — the celebration for Good Friday. The Latin version is given by Mr. Chambers; also a graphic translation and exposition of the whole: "St. Ethelwold directs that on Good Friday all the monks shall go *discalceati*, or shoeless, from Prime 'until the cross is adored.' In the principal service of the day, which begins at Nones, the reading of the Passion according to St. John and a long series of prayers are included, then a cross is made ready and laid upon a

cushion a little way in front of the altar. It is unveiled, and the anthem 'Behold the wood of the cross' (*Ecce lignum crucis*) is sung. The abbot advances, prostrates himself, and chants the seven penetential psalms. Then he humbly kisses the cross. His example is followed by the rest of the monks and by the clergy and congregation." The ancient custom, this, of Creeping to the Cross.

The ritual of St. Ethelwold then proceeds: "Since on this day we celebrate the laying down of the body of our Saviour, if it seem good or pleasing to any to follow on similar lines the use of certain of the religious, which is worthy of imitation for the strengthening of faith in the unlearned vulgar and in neophytes, we have ordered it in this wise. Let a likeness of a sepulchre be made in a vacant part of the altar, and a veil stretched on a ring which may hang there until the adoration of the cross is over. Let the deacons who previously carried the cross come and wrap it in a cloth in the place where it was adored. Then let them carry it back, singing anthems, until they come to the place of the monument, and there having laid down the cross as if it were the buried body of our Lord Jesus Christ, let them say an anthem. And here let the holy cross be guarded with all reverence until the night of the Lord's resurrection. By night let two brothers or three, or more if the throng be sufficient, be appointed who may keep faithful wake there chanting psalms."

The ceremony of the burial, or *Depositio Crucis*, is followed by the *Missa Præsanctificatorum*, the Good Friday communion with a host not sanctified that day but specially reserved from Maundy Thursday; and there is no further reference to the sepulchre until the order for Easter day itself is reached, when St. Ethelwold directs that, "before the bells are rung for Matins, the sacristans are to take the cross and set it in a fitting place."

This example is significant because it shows us the ecclesiastical ceremonial passing into the dramatic by means of pantomime and interjected song. That which follows, from St. Ethelwold's ritual for the third Nocturn at Matins on Easter morning, is of even greater historical interest, for it displays an advance within the ceremonial to dramatic dialogue itself:

While the third lesson is being chanted, let four brethren vest themselves. Let one of these, vested in an alb, enter as though to take part in the service, and let him approach the sepulchre without attracting attention, and sit there quietly with a palm in his hand. While the third respond is chanted, let the remaining three follow, and let them all, vested in copes, bearing in their hands thuribles with incense, and stepping delicately (*pedetemptim*) as those who seek something, approach the sepulchre. These things are done in imitation of the angel sitting in the monument (the sepulchre), and women with spices coming to anoint the body of Jesus. When, therefore, he who sits there beholds them approach him like folk lost and seeking something, let him begin in a dulcet voice of medium pitch to sing *Quem quæritis* (*in sepulchro, o Christicolæ*). And when he has sung it to the end, let the three reply in unison,

Jesum Nazarenum (*crucifixum, o cælicolæ*).

So he —

Non est hic, surrexit sicut prædixerat.
Ite, nuntiate quia surrexit a mortuis.

At the word of this bidding let those three turn to the choir and say,

Alleluia! resurrexit Dominus.

This said, let the one, still sitting there and as if recalling them, say the anthem,

Venite et videte locum.

And saying this, let him rise, and lift the veil, and show them the place bare of the cross, but only the cloths laid there in which the cross was wrapped. And when they have seen this let them set down the thuribles which they bare in that same sepulchre, and take the cloth and hold it up in the face of the clergy, and, as if to demonstrate that the Lord has risen, and is no longer wrapped therein, let them sing the anthem,

Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro,

and lay the cloth upon the altar. When the anthem is done let the prior, sharing in their gladness at the triumph of our King, in that having vanquished death he rose again, begin the hymn,

Te Deum laudamus.

And this begun, all the bells chime out together.[1]

Here then, though the dialogue is yet of chant and hymn, the drama of the Christian era, with action, speech, and stage direction, is born.

The dialogue here presented is what was known as a trope, that is to say, a paraphrase or adaptation of the gospel or of the *introit* (the antiphon and psalm appointed for the opening of the Mass of the day). Continental tropes of this kind we still possess from the century preceding; and one of these, included in a manuscript of the Benedictine abbey of St. Gall, is said to be the simplest and the earliest in existence. If so, the trope in the

[1] Chambers, *Mediæval Stage*, II, 15, 308.

Winchester ritual is probably a survival of the same, or of as early an original. The content of the St. Gall trope of the Resurrection is as follows:

Angels. Whom seek ye in the tomb, O worshippers of Christ?

Three Maries. Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified, O Heavenly Ones.

Angels. He is not here, for he is risen as he said. Go now, announce that he has risen from the tomb.

Resurrexi.

The Latin, like that of Winchester, is the Latin of the gospels in the Vulgate: the elaborations upon the gospels are, in both, almost imperceptible. Indeed it is difficult to resist the conjecture that Easter tropes of some kind were in existence in the Christian church as early as the responsive chant, or antiphon, itself; that is to say, as early as the beginning of the fourth century.

There are also tropes still existent opening with the words "Whom seek ye" (*Quem quæritis*) for Christmas and Ascension Day. They are not so early in manuscript, and are manifestly not so early of composition. They are imitations, whereas the former was a close paraphrase of the scriptural text. Still they are of great importance; for as out of the Easter *Quem* grew a cycle of plays covering the history not only of the resurrection but of the whole passion of Christ, so from the Christmas trope and its accompanying ceremonial grew a cycle of the Nativity which in time extended itself backward to the creation of the world; while, on the other hand, from the Ascension *Quem* proceeded a series that presented,

with scriptural and legendary scene, the history of the saints from Pentecost to the day of doom.

To these secondary germs of cyclical miracles I shall return later. Here, a few words about the further development of the Resurrection play. First, it was enlarged by the assignment of separate speeches to each of the Maries, and to the angels; then, by the addition of other characters, the two disciples Peter and John; then, by the composition of deeply pathetic, and soon exquisitely lyrical, laments (or *planctus*) for the Maries as they approached the sepulchre; then by supplementary scenes of Mary Magdalene and the gardener, and Mary Magdalene and the disciples, and of the Pilgrims journeying to Emmaus. So on, working in that direction inevitably toward the crowning mystery of the Ascension. Following the other course, the lament of the Maries before the tomb was soon preluded by the much more pathetic lamentation of the mother of our Lord before the cross, and by the response of the dying Saviour and the dialogue between his mother and St. John. From that offshoot of the original *planctus* budded plays of the whole crucifixion, the burial, and the harrowing of hell, for the close of Holy Week; and likewise of events immediately preceding: plays of the Passion from Gethsemane to the Crucifixion; of the Mount of Olives and the Last Supper, and so on back to the Entry into Jerusalem. Dates are, I hope, unnecessary: Creizenach, Mone, Julleville, Chambers, Du Méril, Davidson, will supply them in detail. Suffice it to say that developed tropes and germinal dramas on these subjects, less and less by way of song and more by way of versified speech, are of record from the ninth century to the thirteenth; and that scenes of the great drama of the Passion or of

the Resurrection, like the Lament at the Cross, and the Pilgrims, were acted, the former in Lichfield, the latter at the Benedictbeuern monastery as early as the twelfth century. A complete Passion play was presented in Siena about 1200; in 1220 we hear of a play of the Resurrection, and that outside the church in the churchyard, at Beverley in Yorkshire. And, in 1244, of a play of Passion and Resurrection, both performed in Padua.

Of the Beverley Resurrection play of 1220 a story is told in the series of the Historians of the Church of York, so quaint and at the same time so rich in historical association that I cannot pass it by. Mr. Leach, in his illuminating article on *Some English Plays and Players*, has translated it; and I follow him somewhat closely:

It happened that one summer in the church-yard of St. John's Church, on the north side, there was a representation, as usual, by masked performers (*larvatorum*) of the Lord's Resurrection [not "Ascension," as Mr. Leach, by some slip, has it] in words and acting. A large crowd of both sexes was assembled, led there by different impulses, some for the sake of mere pleasure or wonder, others for the holy purpose of stimulating their devotional feelings. But since there was little chance of a desirable position for seeing, especially in the case of very short people (because the crowd stood round the players in a dense ring), a good many went into the church, some to pray, some to see the pictures more closely, and others to while away the day in any kind of recreation or contentment that might offer. Some youths when they got inside happened to find a door half open which gave access to the steps up to the top of the walls. With boyish light-heartedness they climbed up and went to the vaults and galleries (the clerestory and *triforium*) on the top of the church to get, I suppose, through the lofty windows of the towers, or any apertures there might

be in the stained-glass window, a better view of the garb and gestures of the performers, and to hear their speeches more easily, — like Zaccheus when he climbed up the sycamore tree. Some one, however, told the sextons what the youths were doing, and as they were afraid that the boys would make holes in the windows for the sake of seeing the performers, they at once gave chase, and by dint of heavy blows made them retreat. But some of the lads, seeing the punishment inflicted on their companions, to avoid falling into the hands of their pursuers fled to regions still higher, and clambered above the great cross then standing by St. Martin's altar. One of them, as he was looking down, placed his foot on a block of stone, which suddenly gave way and fell with a loud crash on the stone pavement and was broken into fragments. The lad, frightened at the noise, lost his hold and fell also to the ground, and lay senseless and as if dead. The bystanders wept, the parents tore their hair and wailed. But God did not suffer the church, dedicated in the honour of him and his confessor (Saint John of Beverley, Archbishop of York), to be polluted by the shedding of human blood; but wishing it to enjoy greater sanctity for the future, and at the same time to give testimony to the truth which was then being shown in the representation of the Resurrection, in the sight of all those present he raised up the youth supposed to be dead, whole, without the smallest injury in any part of his body. Thus it happened that those who could not through the multitude of people be present at the representation outside the church, saw a more marvellous proof of the resurrection inside; and not only of the resurrection, but also of the Lord's passion.

This was written in the first quarter of the thirteenth century. Human nature, of course, was the same then as it is now: crowds will not stand back; people of low stature will seek other amusements or even take to saying their prayers if the stalwarts in front shut off all view

of the stage; boys will climb and break windows, the police will garnish zeal with folly; accidents will happen, bystanders weep, and parents, broken-hearted, tear their hair. Miraculous escapes still awaken a sensation of mystery and awe, sometimes a vague sense of gratitude to something unknown; but they are somewhat differently reported nowadays.

In to-day's paper, July 6, 1906, I read:

Special Despatch to the *Chronicle*.

CHICAGO.—"Goo-goo-goo!" gurgled Baby Providence Blanda, as she waved her little arms and tried to tell a gathering crowd how it felt to fall four stories and alight unhurt, comfortably seated on a hard cement sidewalk.

When neighbours who had heard of the accident came to the Blanda home to-day to help the mother make arrangements for the funeral, they were amazed to see the fourteen-months-old baby prattling to herself in one corner of the room, while visitors chatted of its strange escape from death.

Leonard Warner, two years of age, floated from a third-story window at 427 Twenty-fifth street on a window screen to-day. The right arm of the child was wrenched, but this was the only injury. The little boy was trying to catch a noisy bluefly that had flown against the screen. He leaned against the screen, which fell. The boy, leaning on the screen, arrived at the sidewalk without change of position. [No comment.]

Six hundred and seventy-six years ago they were a credulous people, and they had ecclesiastics for reporters. The reporter of 1230, says Mr. Leach, "improves the occasion: 'The stone falling without the intervention of man [query and surprise!] plainly indicates the Lord's incarnation from a virgin; the fall of both, *viz.* stone and man, signified his passion as man and God. The stone

broken in the fall was the type of the ram slain; and the youth, the type of Isaac remaining unharmed. And in like manner as the fall was in His humanity a sign of His passion, so his miraculous rising was in his Godhead a sign of His resurrection.'"

Truly the times have changed, and signs and wonders and scriptural exegesis and the annalists with them.

From the Christmas Trope

The Christmas series had its germ, as was said above, in an imitation of the Easter trope. The Christmas trope is of the quest of the Shepherds, and begins:

Quem quæritis in præsepe, pastores, dicite?

The Latin is given by Gautier, Du Méril, and others. I translate —

On Christmas day let two deacons be prepared, clad in dalmatics, and behind the altar let them say:

Whom seek ye in the manger, Shepherds, say?

Let two choir-boys reply:

The Saviour, Christ the Lord, a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, according to the word of the Angel.

Then the deacons:

The child is here, with Mary his mother, concerning whom in prophecy Isaiah foretold: Lo, a Virgin shall conceive and bring forth a Son. Now, proclaiming, tell that He is born.

Then the Cantor shall say in a shrill voice:

Alleluia, alleluia. Now we know in truth that Christ is born on earth; of whom, sing all ye, saying with the prophet, Christ is born.

The Virgin and Child, the Adoration of the Magi, and the Massacre of the Innocents
From "L'Apocalypse en français"

This trope is from a St. Gall manuscript which Mr. Chambers assigns to the eleventh century. It is found also in a brief *Officium Pastorum* which, in the fourteenth century, formed part of the Christmas service in Rouen[1], and it was followed, on Epiphany, by an *Officium Trium Regum* much more elaborate. The trope must have been of much earlier composition than either of these manuscripts, for an Orleans play of the twelfth century, in which it appears, has amalgamated the stories of the star, the *Magi*, Herod, the shepherds, and the birth in the manger, and has already passed from the church to the gates of the monastery. The trope form must even have preceded a still earlier manuscript of the tenth century of Freising; for there, also, the fusion of stories has taken place and the ceremonial element has given way to the dramatic. Nor is this all, — the episode of Herod in the Orleans and Freising plays points to a common original, for neither of these was borrowed from the other. Both of them, moreover, are succeeded by a play of the *Massacre of the Innocents*, which likewise indicates a common source. As early therefore as the tenth century, maybe earlier, there were developed at various places on the continent at least three Christmas plays: the *Shepherds*, the *Magi*, and the *Innocents;* and these plays had so far left the ceremonial trope behind that they were already acted outside of the church and apart from the service. The common material for these and succeeding plays is of course the scriptural account; but it is most interesting to observe that the scriptural participants in these early plays — Herod, scribes, wise men of the East, Herod's messenger, soldiers, mothers of Israel — have already developed the features that characterise them in the popular cycles of

[1] Du Méril, *Orig. Lat.*, p. 147.

the later middle ages: the messenger fawns, the Herod blusters, the soldiers counsel, and the counsellors tremble, here as there. Even the fictitious personalities of the English popular miracles of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are already upon the stage. The midwives of the Chester and so-called Coventry cycles, and Herod's son of the cycle of York, figure in the plays of Orleans and Freising, and in the common source of both, perhaps as early as the year 900.[1] Liturgical plays of the same kind exist in English in a manuscript of the fifteenth century belonging to Shrewsbury School; but they too are undoubtedly the successors of developed tropes of much earlier date. All through the thirteenth century English ecclesiastics were thundering against the participation of clerks in regular orders in the outdoor miracles which were the offspring of liturgical drama; and in the Lichfield statutes of 1188–98 such liturgical dramas, both of the Shepherds and the Resurrection, are mentioned as a thoroughly established institution for Christmas and Eastertide. Plays of the Shepherds and the Three Kings are customary in York in 1255.

The Christmas cycle, like that of Easter, grew by gemination. It was but an easy step backward to the dramatisation of the betrothal of Mary and Joseph, the annunciation, and so forth; and also of the sermon against the Jews, Pagans, and others, ascribed to St. Augustine and read in the Christmas season. For here the Hebrew prophets and pagans, such as the Sibyl, who was supposed to have written the Signs of Judgment (of which we shall later have something to say), and Virgil, who foretold the Golden Age, are called upon to witness

[1] The Rouen, Freising, and Orleans plays are reprinted in Davidson, *Engl. Mystery Plays*, pp. 50, *et seq.*

of the coming Christ. From a collective play of the Prophets (and one such, in Latin, of the eleventh century, still exists),[1] the passage was inevitable to individual plays of the more romantic or historically attractive characters among them: and so sprang into being about 1160 the *Daniel* of one Hilarius, probably an Englishman, who wrote in Latin with French refrains; and a scene between the Sibyl and the Roman emperor (a relic of which is still embedded in one of our cyclic miracles); as well as plays of Nebuchadnezzar, David, Gideon, Moses, and other heroes, with more or less reason included in this or that "prophetic procession."

But by this time the interest had been transferred from prophecy to history; and the dramatist might as well go back at once to Isaac and Rebecca, and the sacrifice of Isaac, and Cain and Abel, and Adam. And so our ancestors reasoned and did. A famous Norman-French, maybe Anglo-Norman, play of the twelfth century called the *Ordo repræsentationis Adæ*, written for public and open-air performance, begins with Adam, takes in Cain and Abel, and includes the Prophets. What more it included we don't know, for the rest is lost. When, in Regensburg, in 1195, a play of the *Creation of the World and the Fall of Lucifer* was given, the backward development of the historical cycle was complete.

The play of *Adam* is historically interesting because evidently an outgrowth of a processional representation of the Prophets, and as such a connecting link between the church sermon and the popular drama. It is also remarkable for dramatic originality, invention of realistic episodes, and adaptation of characters and their "lines" to the edification of the peasant beholders for

[1] *Mystère des Prophètes du Christ* of Limoges; in Du Méril, p. 179.

whom it was intended. Adam is manifestly conscious not only of responsibility, but of a certain superiority to the fair-faced and care-free lass who makes responsibility only too difficult for him. The devil is a handsome, wily, truly seductive young gallant, who flatters Eve not only on the score of beauty, but of her womanly instinct, — how could Adam, he insinuates, who has refused to eat the tempting fruit of knowledge himself, possibly be deemed an arbiter in matters of taste? Cain is the close, calculating, irreverent churl whose character is stamped on all succeeding versions of his part. The Jews of the synagogue by no means suffer the prophets of Christ to make out their case without due opposition, and Balaam appears upon his ass — but Balaam is too entertaining a possibility to be discussed as a mere accessory to any procession. Here he plays no very impressive rôle; but having appeared, he must be accorded dramatic treatment by himself — and that presently.

From Tropes of Advent, Ascension, etc.

So far the materials for a world-cycle had been furnished by the scriptures appropriate to the festivals of Christ's birth and his resurrection. There remained but one step to complete the movement, and that was suggested by the scriptures appropriate to Advent, Holy Thursday, and Whitsun Day. Of these the first celebrates the entry of our Lord into Jerusalem, and so connects the story of his birth and active career with that of his passion and resurrection. It also, indirectly, connects his resurrection with the whole after-story of the church militant; for the collects, *introits*, and scrip-

tures of Advent sound the cry not merely of the first Coming of our Lord in humiliation and grace, but of his second Coming in glory and judgment: "Behold the Bridegroom cometh"; "The kingdom of God is nigh at hand"; "Make straight the way of the Lord"; "Behold, O people of Sion, the Lord will come to save the nations." And there proceed, accordingly, from the celebration of the Advent season dramas of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, and of the Man of Sin, the Antichrist, who is to trouble the nations before the day of that second advent of the Lord.

A specimen of the former, called *The Bridegroom* or *Sponsus*, opening

Adest sponsus qui est Christus; vigilate virgines

is preserved in a manuscript of about 1150 from Limoges.[1] It is written in a mixture of Latin and the vernacular French, and is well adapted by action alone to terrify the simple, and by the music of its verse to impress the learned. As in the parable, the foolish virgins turn in despair, —

Wail, O caitifs, we have slept too long, —

from the wise who have but oil sufficient for themselves to the sellers of oil, who in turn send them back to their wise sisters and to God,

Go, seek your sisters sage, and pray them by God the glorious, for succour of their oil, *Faites o tost, que ja venra l'espos.*

The foolish ones come, weeping, to the marriage-door;

[1] See Creizenach, I, 77. Texts in *Romania* xxii; Du Méril, *Orig. Lat.*, 233–237.

but the Bridegroom has arrived, and turns them away with

Amen dico, vos ignosco, nam caretis lumine,
Quod qui perdunt, procul pergunt hujus aulae limine.

Lamentation, devils, and eternal woe!

Of the Antichrist legend, the earliest dramatisation is in Latin by a German poet of the Tegernsee, and probably of a date near 1160. Of the legend and its origin I shall later give an account; the text of the drama may be found at the end of the Shakespeare Society's edition of the Chester Plays, and in more recent publications.[1] The play is some six hundred lines in length, and is written with tremendous force and decided constructive skill. With its pomp of emperors and kings; its display of the signs and wonders by which the Antichrist wins recognition of his Messiahship; its presentation of classes and abstract ideas, virtues, and vices under characteristic names: *hypocritæ, synagoga, ecclesia, gentilitas;* its Devil, the son of a devil, commissioning vices, Heresy and Hypocrisy, to seduce the innocent; — with its use of legend, scripture, history, morality, symbol, and marvel, all in one, it may justly be regarded as the founder of a new species of drama destined to flourish in other countries, though not till two centuries later: a combination of the miracle and the moral play. Here it interests us as an Advent contribution to the development of the Judgment series.

Similarly, the service for Holy Thursday or Ascension Day lent itself to the dramatisation of the later events of Christian story. In the eleventh century a processional trope of the Ascension, beginning—

[1] From Pez, *Thesaurus, Anecdot. Noviss.*, II, 187. See Creizenach, I, 75.

Descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles
From "L'Apocalypse en français"

Quem creditis super astra ascendisse, O Christicolæ?
Resp. Christum qui surrexit de sepulchro, O cælicolæ.

was used in the church of St. Martial at Limoges;[1] and in an English troper of Canterbury, of equal antiquity, we find a variant, opening *Quem cernitis ascendisse super astra?* Dramatic representations were soon elaborated out of these, and were, undoubtedly, soon combined with those of Whitsun Day, which falls but ten days after Holy Thursday. Indeed the Whitsun celebration of the descent of the Holy Ghost rapidly assumed, because of its seasonable date in May or early June, a leading place among the spectacular festivals of the year. And together with the display of the symbols of the Pentecost, which obtained all over Europe, there came to be presented on Whitsun Day, and the days following, performances which covered a half or the whole of the history of holy writ. The earliest record preserved of such a performance is from Cividale in Italy, where, on the Pentecost and the two succeeding days of 1298, there was acted a "representation of the *Play of Christ, viz.* His passion, resurrection, ascension, the advent of the Holy Ghost, the coming of Christ to judgment, by the clergy of the town." Here was a sequence in one of all elements of the latter half of the cycle. And in 1303, according to the same chronicle,[2] the former and the latter parts are at last brought into conjunction: "In the year 1303," says Giuliano, "there was performed by the clergy, or chapter of the city, a representation; or, rather, representations were performed as follows: first of the Creation of our first parents; then of the Annunciation of the Blessed

[1] Gautier, *Les Tropaires*, 219.

[2] Giuliano da Cividale, *Cronaca Friulana* from D'Ancona, and Muratori, in Chambers, I, 77.

Virgin, the Nativity and many other matters; then of the Passion and the Resurrection, the Ascension and the Descent of the Holy Spirit, and of Antichrist and other matters; and finally of the Coming of Christ to Judgment. And sermons were preached in the cathedral church on the feast of the Pentecost and the two days following."

Thus from collect, *introit*, lesson, or gospel, to processional and trope; from trope to liturgical drama; from that to a series of sacred dramas; and from the three great series,— the Nativity and its prophetic prologue, the Resurrection and its antecedent Passion, the Ascension and its sequel to the Second Coming of Christ,— from these three series to the cosmic cycle, gradually and imperceptibly the miracle plays of the middle ages grew, gaining in stature and in favour with the people; and in due proportion losing favour with the church to which they owed their birth.

Not every play, of course, could trace its genealogy to the twin egg of liturgy and festival. Once sacred performances had become common, some were made for the festival without reference to the trope, and *vice versa;* and presently plays of saints or of biblical lore were composed for an occasional emergency or for edification; finally for amusement alone.

CHAPTER III

THE INVASION OF THE HUMOROUS

The Feast of the Ass

I have already said that Balaam deserves a section to himself. He and his ass — especially the ass — were destined to play sad havoc with certain sacred festivals in which at first they had played an innocent and even laudable part. Once the donkey thrust his head within the church-door, liturgy, festival, and drama were lost in the stupor of his ears or the bathos of his braying. He began, I think, with Balaam and the procession of Prophets, proceeded with the *Magi*, and then with the Virgin, who unwarily rode him into Egypt, and ended with Christ himself in the once solemn, nay, even triumphant, Palm Sunday approach to Jerusalem. The *Prophets*, the *Flight into Eygpt*, and the *Entry*, he turned into festivals of his own, variously denominated, but always feasts of parody, irreverence, frequently of drunkenness and obscenity. Without doubt some of the profanity and pagan practice which characterised these orgies was a survival of prechristian rites by which Teutons and Celts, even Romans as well, had been wont to welcome the approach of spring or propitiate that of winter; but the favouring occasion in lands and among peoples called Christian was the appearance of a donkey in the church.

The sixth century sermon of the Pseudo-Augustine against Jews, Pagans, and Arians, in which the prophets were summoned to bear witness of Christ, may have been the innocent promoter of the scandal. For, though the preacher himself refrained from enlisting Balaam among the prophets, and though we have no manuscript authority for the appearance of the Aramæan in that rôle as a dramatic character before the eleventh century, Balaam's pretension to the honour was inevitable; and his pre-eminence, if once he were admitted, was irresistible. As soon as the prophets of Christ's Coming stepped out of the sermon into a ceremonial procession, Balaam slipped into the throng. You could not suppress him: he had a vested and even prior right. What earlier and more explicit prognostication of the Messiah than his — "I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth"? Indeed, he must have joined the ecclesiastical procession in the gorgeous ritual of Christmas, or the Circumcision, or Epiphany or the octave of Epiphany, long before the date of his earliest surviving witness. And where Balaam marched, his ass marched under him. *The Mystery of the Prophets of Christ* of Limoges,[1] eleventh century, which dramatises the pseudo-Augustinian sermon of the sixth, does not present a Balaam; but that does not preclude the probability of earlier adaptations which did present him but have not survived: even this mystery varies somewhat the prophets of the original sermon, — what may others have done?

[1] Du Méril, *Origines Latines*, 179.

The earliest appearance of the Ass in a ritual called by his name we shall presently examine. He is, however, pervasive of burlesques of ecclesiastical ceremonial; and it is not always easy to determine the exact excuse for his presence when the name of the festival has not been preserved. We are told that under the dissolute Michael III of Constantinople (842–867) one Theophilus, a buffoon of the court, was invested in the robes of the patriarch; and that, attended by twelve roysterers whom he called his metropolitans, clad also in ecclesiastical vestments, he desecrated the sacred vessels of the altar and parodied the holy communion. Then that, mounted on a white ass, on the day of a solemn festival, and with his train, in which the Emperor himself figured, he met the true patriarch at the head of the clergy and by licentious shouts and obscene gestures disordered that procession.[1] This escapade may have been a burlesque of the *processio prophetarum* conducted by the true patriarch, or of the Entry into Jerusalem, or it may have been unpremeditated devilry. At any rate, the ass is in evidence; and also the revulsion against the straitness of religious ceremony.

There is a tradition to the effect that about the middle of the eleventh century Heribert IV persuaded the clergy of the Vermandois to suppress the Feast of the Ass. This tradition has been doubted; but in a manuscript of the years 1160–1180 which used to be in the cathedral library of Beauvais[2] there was preserved until the seventeenth century the ritual of the Feast itself — *Festa Asinaria.* It was a development of the *officium* or service for the eve of the Circumcision, *i. e.* for New

[1] Gibbon, IV, 206; and Chambers, I, 328.

[2] Chambers, I, 285.

Year's eve; and it is described by French writers as late as the eighteenth century. The date of its composition was shown by the fact that it closed with a prayer for Louis VII and his queen, Adèle. This first manuscript has disappeared, but a second of about half a century later has recently been discovered in the British Museum by Mr. Chambers, who describes it in his *Mediæval Stage*. From the accounts of the two manuscripts the service may be to some extent reconstructed.

At the first vespers the *Cantor* intoned in the middle of the nave a hymn of the day of gladness: "Let no sour-faced person stay within the church; away on this day with envy and heartache, let all be cheerful who would celebrate the feast of the ass" —

> Lux hodie, lux lætitiæ, me judice tristis
> Quisquis erit, removendus erit solemnibus istis,
> Sint hodie procul invidiæ, procul omnia mæsta,
> Læta volunt, quicunque colunt asinaria[1] festa.

After lauds all marched from the cathedral to welcome the ass which stood in waiting at the great door. The door being then shut, each of the canons stood with bottle of wine and glass in hand while the *Cantor* chanted the Processional of Drink, *Conductus ad Poculum:*

"Solemnise, O Christ, the Kalends of January, and as King acknowledged, receive us at Thy nuptials" —

> Kalendas Januarias
> Solennes, Christe, facias,
> Et nos ad tuas nuptias,
> Vocatus rex, suscipias.

One may picture the pause, the beast in his priestly trappings encircled by hilarious celebrants, the popping

[1] The second Beauvais has *præsentia*.

of corks and gurgling of wine, the toasting of "my lord, the Ass," the quaffing of deep draughts. Suddenly the door is thrown open, and up the aisle the procession streams, conducting the Ass with song:

Orientis partibus
Adventavit Asinus,
Pulcher et fortissimus
Sarcinis aptissimus.

Hez, Sire Asnës, car chantez,
Belle bouche, rechignez,
Vous aurez du foin assez
Et de l'avoine a plantez.

. . . . . .

Amen dicas, Asine, (*hic genuflectebatur*)
Jam satur de gramine,
Amen, Amen, itera,
Aspernare vetera.

Hez va, hez va! hez va, hez!
Bialx, Sire Asnës, car chantez;
Vous aurez du foin assez
Et de l'avoine a plantez.

Nine stanzas in all, of which these are the first and last; while the following is a translation of the whole, not all sophisticated, I hope, nor altogether slavish:

Out of the regions of the East
The Ass arrives, most potent beast,
Piercing our hearts with his pulchritude,
And for our burdens, well endued.

Hez, Sire Asnes, come sing and say,
Open your gorgeous mouth and bray:
You shall have hay, your fill alway,
You shall have oats, to boot, to-day!

Slow is he upon his feet,
Mortal slow, unless you beat
Him with a stick, and strike in his sides
Spurs that no mortal ass abides.

Hez, Sire Asnes, etc.

He, in the mountains of Sichèn,
Nurtured of old was, near Reubèn:
The waters of Jordan he forded 'em,
Came a-prancing to Bethlehem.

Hez, Sire Asnes, etc.

See him, with his generous ears,
Sprout of yoke-enduring years, —
Most egregious Ass is he,
Lord of Asses, certainly.

Hez, Sire Asnes, etc.

Fawns are nowhere when *he* leaps, —
Does nor kids, — on parlous steeps;
Nor the Midian dromedary
When *he* marches, *velox*, very.

Hez, Sire Asnes, etc.

Frankincense, Arabian gold,
Myrrh of Saba, — now, behold,
His the virtue asinine
Bore within the church divine.

Hez, Sire Asnes, etc.

While your carts, all kinds, he drags
Full of fardels, packs, and bags,
Still his philosophic jaw
Triturates the patient straw.

Hez, Sire Asnes, etc.

Barley grinds he with its beard,
Feasts on thistles, purple-speared,

Thrashes in his own back-yard
Corn from stubble, chewing hard.

Hez, Sire Asnes, etc.

Say Amen, most reverend Ass, (*they kneel*)
Now your belly 's full of grass:
Bray Amen, again, and bray;
Spurn old customs down the way.

Hez va! hez va! hez va! hez!
Open your beautiful mouth and bray;
A bottle o' hay, and the devil to pay,
And oats a-plenty for you, to-day.

This is the " Prose " of the Ass, — a chant interpolated into the regular service, — and itself the central feature of the *Asinaria* as distinguished from its cognate *festum stultorum*. Of that Feast of Fools, which came to be amalgamated with the ceremony of the Ass, the distinctive features are the transference of the precentor's staff to a subdeacon who has been chosen *dominus festi*, bishop, pope, or king of fools, and the singing of what is called a Prose of Fools. Provision is made for the transference in the Beauvais *officia;* but for the ceremony in full, and as the climax of the vespers of the second day, we shall have to turn to another ritual, the *Officium Circumcisionis* of the cathedral of Sens. In several ways it supplements, in others abridges, the more primitive ritual of Beauvais.

The Sens *Officium* was probably written by Pierre de Corbeil, who had been associated with the famous Eudes de Sully, bishop of Paris, in an attempt to reform the riotous ceremony of the Circumcision in Nôtre Dame, in the year 1199. This Pierre de Corbeil was afterward bishop coadjutor of Lincoln, and he died archbishop of

Sens. While he retained the Prose of the Ass for first vespers in his ritual for Sens, it is possible that he did not admit the beast within the church edifice; and it is certain that he eliminated the drinking-bout before the processional.

It appears to have been the custom for the subdeacons and secular clergy of the lower orders to hail with unseemly mirth the singing of that verse of the *Magnificat* on New Year's eve which runs *Deposuit potentes de sede*, "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek," and to construe too literally the transference of the staff of authority from precentor to subdeacon by which the sacred lesson was symbolised. Bells had been irregularly jangled before the service, masks prepared, and so forth; now clerks and subdeacons repeated, *ad nauseam*, the *Deposuit*, with ribaldry and shouting; changed places and probably vestments with the canons; sat in their stalls; burlesqued the service, and marched out of church to a drinking song. According to Dom Grenier, the censing for the day of the feast was done with pudding and sausages; but in all probability this sacrilege had nothing to do with the ritual itself and was of later origin.

In this feast elements had met which could not but react in disorder, irreverence, tomfoolery, riot. From that sobering and uplifting clause, "He hath put down the mighty," proceeded the opportunity for inversion of status, the celebration of the essential equality of men. And, since that was exactly the conception underlying the jovial festival of the Roman Kalends, of exactly the same season of the year, through the window leaped nature reassured. At the Kalends from the first to the third

of January, there had been illumination and decoration of houses, revelry in the streets, disguises and maskings, men parading in women's clothes and in the skins of animals. There had been gift-giving, and drinking and gambling, master with man. Now in the feast of the Deposal of the Mighty, from an early date known as the Feast of Fools, there were included not only these customs of pagan Rome, but customs inherited from barbarian ancestors of the west — unconscious reminiscences of festivals propitiatory of animals and vegetables and gods. Hence the dancing, the drinking, the exchanging of clothes, the turning of them inside out, and the parading as beasts.[1]

On the other side, as I have said, from the association of a certain prophet of Christ with the rites commemorative of Christ's nativity and youth, sprang that ridicule of the sublime which made of the Feast of the Circumcision, and soon of Christmas and Holy Innocents' Day, a Festival of Asses as well.

That Balaam is to be blamed for the introduction of the ass, and that the Magi have a responsibility only less alarming, appears from an examination of the constant factor in all the Fool-Ass rites: the song in honour of that beast. It has been thought by some that the opening words, *Orientis partibus*, indicate an east European birthplace for the ceremony, say Constantinople, where from the ninth century to the twelfth ecclesiastical festivals were disgraced by orgies. But this is not at all likely. The first, third, and fifth stanzas of the song point directly and only to Balaam: the origin is therefore in the prophets' procession of the early church. Of

[1] See Fowler's *Roman Festivals*, "Kalends of January," "Saturnalia," "Lupercalia."

course the Asinus came *orientis partibus:* his master Balaam did the same. "Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram," he says, "out of the mountains of the east."[1] Of course the dromedaries whom the Asinus surpasses in speed are those of Midian, for Midian and Moab are interchangeable in the scripture account. And where else are Moab, Midian, and Aram but *sub Reuben?* I trust the reader will not press me concerning Sichen or Shechem, — I refer him to the goliard who wrote the song: he had a right to his little joke, even to the extent of positing Shechem on the coast of Bohemia, if he pleased.

So much for the responsibility of Balaam; that of the Magi is confined to the sixth stanza, and in all probability was of later attribution. But it is only natural that not having camels, and having already discovered the qualifications of the ass, the celebrants of Epiphany should have early transferred to the latter animal the privilege of bearing the gifts of the Three Kings into the church.

As early as the thirteenth century, and the first half of it, the Ass derives added dignity from the festival of the octave of Epiphany when the flight of the Virgin into Egypt was commemorated. "It was customary in Beauvais, every year, on the 14 January, to represent the Virgin in this episode by the most beautiful girl in the city. She was placed on an ass richly caparisoned, and an infant was set in her arms. Thus mounted she preceded the Bishop and his clergy, and they all went in grand procession from the cathedral to the parish church of St. Stephen. On entering the chancel, they ranged themselves on the gospel side of the altar. The mass

[1] Numbers xxiii, 7.

immediately commenced; and the *introit*, the *Lord have mercy upon us*, the *Gloria Patri*, the *Creed*, and other parts of the service were terminated by the burden of *Hin-ham*, *Hin-ham*, *Hin-ham*, in imitation of the braying of an ass. But what is most suprising," says Du Cange in this account of the ceremony, "the officiating priest, instead of saying *Ita missa est* at the end of the mass, concluded by singing three times *Hin-ham*, *Hin-ham*, *Hin-ham*."[1] Hone, in his account, adds that the audience brayed in reply, and that during the performance hymns were sung in praise of the Ass.[2] In a play of *Herod*, which was early acted at Autun and other places, the Flight into Egypt was without doubt included; and since Herod is but the connecting link between the visit of the Magi and the Flight, a play covering this portion of the Nativity would introduce the Ass both at the beginning and at the end.

During the fourteenth century this period of the rule of Herod at Autun was called the Feast of Fools. At Rouen, however, the Procession of the Prophets took place on Christmas eve, and was called the *Processio Asinorum*. Of this ceremony there survives a fourteenth-century Latin *ordinarium*,[3] beginning *Nota*, Cantor: *si Festum Asinorum fiat, processio ordinetur post Terciam. Si non fiat Festum, tunc fiat processio, ut nunc prænotetur.* And the rubric proceeds to order the march of the prophets and the building of a furnace in the middle of the nave of the church. The furnace is for the *Three Children*, and is to be lighted with lint and tow — the scene for a

[1] Hone's account is based on this of Du Cange, *Glossarium*, under "Festum Asinorum."

[2] Hone, *Anc. Myst.*, 162.

[3] In Du Cange, *Glossarium*, "Festum Asinorum."

play growing out of the presence of Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar among the prophets. Here, also, the Balaam episode has its little play:

Two messengers from King Balak shall say: "Balaam, come and do thus."

Then Balaam, in fine clothing (*ornatus*), *sedens super asinam*,[1] *spurs on his feet, shall hold the reins and drive the spurs into the Ass; and a youth having wings and brandishing a sword shall stand in the way of the Ass. Then one within the Ass shall say,*

"Why dost thou lacerate poor me with thy spurs?"

When this is said, the Angel shall say to him,

"Cease from doing the command of King Balak!"

Similarly in a thirteenth-century text of Laon, the drama of Balaam closes the *Processio Prophetarum.*

In Germany, and elsewhere on the continent, the donkey invaded still another festival, that of Palm Sunday. On that day, as Naogeorgus tells us,[2] "the anniversary of Christ's riding into Jerusalem, a wooden ass, with an image on it, being placed on a platform with wheels, and dressed up, was drawn by the people bearing boughs and branches of palm to the church door. On its arrival there the priest blessing the branches, converted them into assurances for a year against loss or damage by tempest; and then, prostrating himself before the ass, he lay on his face till another priest roused him by the application of a rod of the largest size. On his rising, two others fell on their faces and sang in that posi-

[1] "Hence the name of the festival," says Du Cange.

[2] Kirchmeyer, transl. by Barnaby Googe: in *N. Shakespeare Society*, I, 332.

tion; afterwards, standing and pointing at the figure on the ass, they announced that olive-boughs were strewn before him because he had come to redeem the faithful. This ended, the ass with the figure being moved along, the people cast branches before both; and the dummy was drawn into the church in procession, the priests going before. The people followed, struggling for the holy boughs over which the pageant had passed. The whole being concluded, the boys went to the church in the afternoon, and bargained with the sexton for the use of the ass, which they drew through the streets, singing verses and gathering money, bread, and eggs from the people."

Here again is an entertaining example, not only of the pervasive quality of the beast, and of his virtue to adorn with nonsense all that he touched, but also of that attempt at idealising pagan folk-festivals into Christian ceremonies which long ago Gregory the Great had advised his missionaries to make. For the venerable Bede tells us that Gregory was, originally, of the opinion that Augustine should destroy all idols, groves, and temples of the savage Britons whom he proposed to christianise. But after this first Archbishop of Canterbury had reached the scene of his activities he received word from the Pope that the policy was to be of another kind. The temples and the groves and festivals need not be destroyed, but the idols must be. The temples should be sprinkled with holy water, and relics of sacred objects set in them to take the place of the idols in the worship of the folk. As for the oxen that our ancestors were wont to immolate to their heathen gods, they should now be sacrificed in commemoration of Christian mysteries and miracles. The huts of branches that the Britons were

used to erect during the pagan rites might still be built about the temples, thus transformed into churches, on the day of their dedication, or on the festivals of the martyrs whose relics they contained. Thus the rustic folk, while still continuing to kill their cattle and celebrate their solemnities as of yore, might do so with a feasting that had become religious.

In the Palm Sunday festival described above, the flagellation of the priest and other officiants was, in fact, a survival of an ancient folk-rite by which at Eastertide the spirit of winter or of death was expelled from the symbolic representative of the Old Year; and the decking with palms or green branches of willow unconsciously perpetuated the symbolic ritual of the newly awakened spirit of vegetation, the Mother of Months; the *Anna Perenna* of the Romans as of the Gauls. These pagan ceremonies were taken up into the beautiful pageant of the Hosanna; and similarly the pagan practice of retaining the withered branches of one spring-festival till the beginning of the following spring, was perpetuated under the custom of blessing on Ash Wednesday the ashes of the palms over which the benediction had been pronounced the Palm Sunday of the year before.

Brand, in his *Popular Antiquities*, insinuates that the Palm-donkey custom was prevalent in England; but Mr. Chambers, whose authority is greatly to be respected, holds otherwise. It may, by the way, interest the reader to know that the bones of the real Ass which was ridden by Christ into Jerusalem may yet be exhumed in Verona. For, according to a legend of somewhat dubious ancestry, the animal "came ultimately to that city, died there, was buried in a wooden effigy at Sta. Maria in Organo, and honoured by a yearly procession." Unfortunately the

matter is in dispute, some saying that this was the ass of one Silenus.[1]

Of course this illustrious animal figured from earliest times in representations of the Nativity. He stood in primitive mummery, rudely joined or carved or painted, in company with the ox, beside the manger of the Infant. His rôle in such a play as the *Mystère de la Nativité du Christ*,[2] of which a thirteenth-century manuscript is preserved by the Benediktbeuern monastery in Bavaria, is significant for its diverse possibilities. The Ass makes his entry with Balaam, who chants the words "A star shall arise from Jacob" (and one may imagine that here, as in a certain Hamburg play of the Three Kings, the star hangs in sight and the donkey discovers it). He next has opportunity to assist at the birth in the stable in company with Joseph, who sits by *in habitu honesto et prolixa barba.* The star again appearing, the Ass shifts to the service of the adoring Magi. Soon afterwards he plays a plodding part in the flight into Egypt — *præcedens Maria asinum;* and finally bears the wonder-working Child through the realms of the Egyptian king, — idols, priests, and rulers falling in submission at his approach.

To this Benediktbeuern *Mystère de la Nativité* we shall have occasion to revert in our consideration of still another festival, that of the Boy Bishop.

The Feast of Fools

It has already been remarked that in the *Officia Circumcisionis*, or rituals for New Year's eve and New Year's day of Beauvais and Sens, provision was made not only

[1] Chambers, I, 333.

[2] Text in Du Méril, 187.

for the glorification of the Ass, but for the exaltation, in burlesque, of the year-long despised subdeacons of the church. Their opportunity came with the transfer of the precentor's staff, or *baculus*, when on the last evening of the Old Year the *Magnificat* was sung: "The mighty he hath put down (*deposuit*) from their seats, and hath exalted those of low degree." Out of this transfer grew the Feast of Fools, a *tripudium*, in its conception distinct from that of the Ass, but speedily, and at as early a date, perhaps, marked with similar riot. The subdeacons were an unconsidered order, neither fish, flesh, nor fowl, nor yet good red herring. They were not to be ranked with priests and deacons of regular orders, nor were they allowed the secular privileges of choir boys or of the laity. Beletus,[1] a French ecclesiastic and dignitary, writing before 1180, calls them *incertus ordo*, and says that having no fixed and appropriate festival, as deacons, priests, and even choir boys had, they had seized upon this chance and were celebrating it *officio confuso*, at the Circumcision, or Epiphany or the octave of Epiphany. That is to say, on January 1, January 6, or January 14. The Feast of the Ass was the levelling of man and brute; the Feast of the *Deposuit* was the levelling of ecclesiastical orders, soon of all order. The "precentor," probably the *dominus festi*, the lord of revels of the year just terminated, hands over the *baculus*, the symbol of his authority, to his newly elected successor, — representative of the subdeacons, lord of the jollification of the incoming year. Immediately there takes place (as long ago in the New Year's feast of pagan Rome) a rapturous topsy-turvy of degrees, a reign of the unconsidered. The subdeacons, howling —

[1] *De Divin. Offic.*, Cap. 72, in Du Cange, *s. v. Kalendæ.*

Novus annus hodie
Monet nos lætitiæ
Laudes inchoare,
Felix est principium
Finem cujus gaudium
Solet terminare, —

and so on, assume the vestments of their superiors, and take the places of the canons in the stalls.

This *Novus annus hodie*, or the well-known *Lætemur gaudiis*, or a similar chant for the investment of the lord of the feast with the *baculus*, was used as the *Conductus ad Bacularium;* and was, I suppose, the "Prose of Fools" as distinguished from that of the Ass; though sometimes the *Orientis partibus* is identified with the Feast as its proper prose.

"In France, at different cathedral churches," says Hone, describing this upheaval of the undercrust, "there was a Bishop or an Archbishop of Fools elected; and in the churches immediately dependent upon the papal see, a Pope of Fools. These mock pontiffs had usually a proper suite of ecclesiastics, and one of their ridiculous ceremonies was to shave the precentor of Fools upon a stage erected before the church in the presence of the populace, who were amused during the operation by his lewd and vulgar discourses accompanied by actions equally reprehensible. They were mostly attired in the ridiculous dresses of pantomime players and buffoons, and so habited entered the church, and performed the service accompanied by crowds of laity in masks, representing monsters, or with their faces smutted to excite fear or laughter, as occasion might require. Some of them personated females or panders or wandering actors, and practised wanton devices. During divine

service they sang indecent songs in the choir, ate rich puddings at the horn of the alter, played at dice upon it by the side of the 'priest' while he celebrated Mass, incensed it with smoke from old burnt shoes; and, with unblushing effrontery, ran leaping all over the church. The 'Bishop' or 'Pope of Fools' performed the service habited in pontifical garments, and gave his benediction; when it was concluded he was seated in an open carriage, and drawn about to different parts of the town followed by a large train of clergy and laymen, and by men stark-naked hauling carts laden with filth which they threw upon the populace that was assembled to see the procession. These licentious festivities were called the December Liberties. They were always held at Christmas time or near to it, but were not confined to one particular day; and they seem to have lasted through the chief part of January."

This account, which I have varied somewhat from Hone's by returning to the original, is derived from an indignant expostulation addressed by the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris in the year 1445 to the prelates of the church;[1] and it brought about something of a reform, — one of a series of Augean purgations, none of which, however, dispensed with the need of one still newer and more Herculean. The ecclesiastical history of France teems with remonstrances, spasmodic reforms, and relapse. In spite of inhibition and modification the custom ran its course, joining hands by the year 1200, maybe earlier, with the orgy of the Ass; diffusing its amalgamated bulk over half of December and January, drawing in its train the erstwhile sweet and stately procession of the choir boys for Innocents' day; and,

[1] Du Cange, *s. v. Kalendæ.*

blasphemous, drunken, often obscene, parading Europe and degrading its rituals till the end of the sixteenth, nay, even the middle of the seventeenth century. No wonder the Archbishop of Sens, Louis, writing in 1445, says that all observers should tremble and blush at the enormity of the sacrilege by which a decorous and pleasant festival graced by the name of our Lord had been turned into an obscenity: a *Festum fatuorum, videlicet coagulatio malorum hominum exultantium in rebus pessimis.*

This feast, as I have already said, was in its origin entirely independent of the jollifications which immediately attended Christmas. The deacons had their anniversary from vespers to vespers on Christmas day and the succeeding day of St. Stephen, since Stephen himself was a deacon; the priests had theirs on the festival of St. John the Evangelist, December 27; and the choir boys theirs on the commemoration of the Massacre of the Holy Innocents, December 28.[1] Thus from very early times the services of the three days after Christmas were the seemly prerogative of their respective officiants. From the beginning of the tenth century notices survive of these observances with much the same ecclesiastical procedure as that which marked the transfer of authority in the festival of the subdeacons. But the procedure of the Christmas *tripudia* was dignified in its inception; it anticipated historically the festival of subdeacons; and it never attained, even in its abuse, so infamous a notoriety. The latter celebration, on the other hand, though it is not noticed before 1180 or thereabouts, had even then acquired its derogatory sobriquet: it is for Beletus the *festum subdiaconorum quod vocamus stultorum;*

[1] Du Cange, *s. v. Kalendæ*, quoting Beletus, Cap. 120.

then the "*festum fatuorum*, most accursed day, on which so many enormities and disgraceful practices are wont to be tolerated." In 1212 it is the "*festum follorum* when the staff is received," and in 1230 the "feast of the fatuous or of the New Year's staff." By 1222, and even earlier at Sens and Beauvais, we notice that it has sucked into its whirlpool the *asinaria festa* into which the Procession of the Prophets had lapsed; later we begin to read of the Feasts of Fools *or* of Asses. In 1246 at Nevers we find that the Feast of Fools has swallowed also the Boy Bishop and his festival of Innocents' day; and by 1360 that, in Germany, the fool-master of the staff is lord of asses and boy bishop as well. This is at Mosburg, where one of the New Year carols for the scholars' "bishop" begins —

Gregis pastor Tityrus
Asinorum dominus
Noster est episcopus,

and ends —

Veneremur Tityrum
Qui nos propter baculum
In vitat ad epulum.[1]

Similarly the festivals of St. Stephen, St. John the Evangelist, Epiphany, and the octave of Epiphany, even those of earlier occasion, — St. Catherine's, St. Clement's, and St. Nicholas', — were drawn into the vortex, and shared the obloquy of the Feast of Fools. So we meet with the Archbishop of Innocents, *alias* "*stultus*," and the *Episcopus fatuus vel Innocentium*, the Fool-bishop, the Ass-archbishop, and other such combinations of the original elements even down to 1645.

[1] See Chambers, I, 320, for the whole song; and *passim* for facts here cited.

In England the career of the festival was not so lurid. Introduced in all probability by Pierre de Corbeil about the beginning of the thirteenth century, when he was coadjutor of Lincoln, it was forbidden, in 1236, by Bishop Grosseteste of that diocese as "a vain and filthy recreation hateful to God and dear to devils"; and, in 1238, as "an execrable custom permitted in certain churches, by which the feast of the Circumcision is defiled."[1] In both cases the ceremony is specified by name, *festum stultorum*. It survived, however, until 1390; for, during his visitation of Lincoln in that year, the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Courteney, "was credibly informed that vicars and clerics of that church are still by way of disturbing divine service on the day of the Circumcision, assuming the garb of laymen, indulging with uproar, and foolish harangues and games, in what are commonly and fitly called *festa stultorum*." He therefore "forbids vicars now, and for all time to come, and all other servants of the church, to take part in such rites and in their public drinkings and other unseemly practices."[2] On the margin of this order,[3] in the Chapter Act Book, "a sarcastic vicar has written 'Harrow barrow! Here goes the Feast of Fools (*hic subducitur festum stultorum*).'" The burlesque of the "King of Fools," held in Beverley on New Year's eve and day, had disappeared in 1391, and as a sop for refraining from the *antiqua consuetudo*, the *subdiaconi et clerici de secunda forma* were allowed a special "gorge" for the occasion.

[1] Grosseteste, *Epistolæ:* original quoted in Chambers, I, 322.

[2] *Lincoln Statutes*, from original in Chambers, I, 322.

[3] Leach, in *Furnivall Miscellany*, p. 222.

CHAPTER IV

THE BOY BISHOP AND THE ST. NICHOLAS PLAYS

The Benediktbeuern *Mystery of the Nativity*, of which we spoke in connection with the Feast of the Ass, is strangely comprehensive of material, historical as well as dramatic. It not only presents us with the pageant of the prophets, St. Augustine, the Sibyl, etc., Balaam and the Ass, and the high priests disputing, with the scene of the Annunciation and the visit to Elizabeth, the nativity, the star, the three Magi, Herod and the shepherds, devils and angels, the massacre of the innocents, and with the rest as already related; it also introduces, for the first time as a dramatised personality, a character already famous in Christmas ritual, the Boy Bishop, *Episcopus Puerorum*, a character destined to long-lived popularity in ceremonial, burlesque, and tradition in England and on the Continent alike. In this mystery the *Episcopus Puerorum* plays, indeed, no extended part: he rebukes the High Priest and the Jews for their unbelief in the miraculous birth, and refers the prophets to St. Augustine for verification of their predictions;[1] but the manner of his dramatic appearance points to the religious quality of his origin. His character was familiar to the church from remote times. He is the acknowledged leader of the choir boys in their festivals of St. Nicholas

[1] See text in Du Méril, p. 191.

and Holy Innocents. As the earliest record of such festivals Chambers cites a passage in which Ekkehard tells of the pleasure that King Conrad I had in viewing the procession of the choir boys on Innocents' day of the year 911, at the monastery of St. Gall: "It would be a long story to tell what pleasures he had by day and night, especially in the procession of the children; and he was amazed at their discipline, for though he had ordered that apples should be strewn before them down the middle of the aisle, not even the tiniest lad broke ranks or stretched his hand out to get one." In the Winchester troper of the last part of the tenth century provision was made for the participation of the choir boys in the services from first to second vespers, and mention is made of their festivals by writers of the two centuries succeeding; notably by Beletus, who says that as the deacons had their St. Stephen's day, and the priests their day of St. John, so to complete the Christmas *triduum*, "the choir boys, that is the least of age and rank, had the festival of the Holy Innocents for a tripudium or jollification." From the beginning of the thirteenth century at York certain duties are recorded as imposed upon the leader of the boys, the Little Bishop, Scholars' Bishop, or Boy Bishop. From the same century copies survive of the service performed by the Boy Bishop and his child dignitaries in French churches on the third day after Christmas;[1] and from the fourteenth century we have the ritual as practised in Salisbury Cathedral.[2] There was a Boy Bishop there before 1222, and at St. Paul's before 1225.

Nothing can be found of the puerile or irreverent in

[1] Texts in Du Cange, *Kalendæ*.

[2] Text in Chambers, II, p. 282.

the ceremonies and processions as first provided by the church for the festival of Holy Innocents. But on the continent, and in a much milder sense in England, abuses from without invaded the celebration, — turbulence, disguisings, profane plays, and mockery of divine worship. That such should be the case is not at all surprising when we consider that similar ceremonies intrusted to older heads had speedily succumbed to the temptation; and that the *causa causans* of the Boys' "high jinks" was precisely that which underlay the jollifications of subdeacons, deacons, and priests, — a natural reaction against the artificial restraint of the ecclesiastical year. As a whole, however, the reign of the Boy Bishop was less obnoxious to criticism than that of the Lord of Asses or the Abbot of Fools; and it certainly preserved in England, France, and Germany, for a longer period the integrity of its original religious tradition.

Though the choir boys elected their Bishop on the eve of St. Nicholas, December 5 (probably the ancient season of their festival), his duties in most places did not begin till the eve of Holy Innocents, after the festivals of deacons and priests were concluded. Excellent accounts of the ceremony and the service — which was in Latin, of course — are supplied by Du Cange, Hone, and Chambers; but since Mr. Leach [1] has dealt principally with the English custom, I shall draw, in what follows, upon him. At the *Deposuit* the bishop or dean or abbot changed places with the Boy Bishop; and canons, archdeacons, and so forth, similarly exchanged with the corresponding dignitaries of the boys. In the recessional the Boy Bishop came last, as of highest dignity, while the real dignitaries were turned into candle-holders,

[1] "The Schoolboys' Feast," *Fortnightly*, Jan., 1896.

A Monument to a Boy-Bishop

From "Ancient Mysteries Described"

incense-bearers, and the like. In the Salisbury office, there being no altar of St. Nicholas convenient, the Boy Bishop with his train marched to the altar of the Trinity and All Saints, and there began the chant *Centum quadraginta:* "One hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth, the first-fruits of God and the Lamb" (*Revelation*), referring to the children killed by Herod! Then followed the "verse" sung by three boys: "These were redeemed from all, because they were not defiled with women; for they have remained virgins. Therefore they reign with God, and the Lamb with them." The Boy Bishop, continues Mr. Leach, like a real bishop censed the altar and the image of the Saint. The Boy Precentor began the anthem of St. Mary. Then the Boy Bishop took his seat, and recited the verse, "Thou art beautiful in form beyond the sons of men (*Speciosus forma pro filiis hominum*); and since this verse was directed in response by the choir to him, it called for the requirement in the York Minster Statutes that the Boy Bishop was to be the senior boy, "so long as he was sufficiently good-looking." Afterwards the Boy Bishop blessed the people and clergy, and then, being saluted as Prince of the Church, he concluded the service in the usual way. On Innocents' day all services, even the Mass, were conducted by him and his *quasi* priests; he even preached a sermon (which was, of course, written for him).

Each evening of the celebration, supper was provided to the "Bishop" and his train by the real dignitaries. There were contributions levied in church, and by bands which paraded the streets, the proceeds of which went to the "Bishop." There were dances at night, and disguisings, and plays, all in the church. For the next fortnight

the Boy Bishop, with a staff composed of chaplain, steward, and choristers, went a-horseback, on visitation of his "diocese," levying tribute (and no joke was it either) from the gentry and the clergy around. The receipts for York in 1396 came, according to present values, to $875, with two or three gold rings, silk purses, and silver spoons to boot. After the Boy Bishop had entertained his schoolfellows with all the hot birds they could eat and cold beer they could drink, and paid his other episcopal expenses, he had some $400 left. Mr. Leach, who clings to the tradition discredited by many, that the Eton "Montem" is a relic of the Boy Episcopate, tells us that in the last years of its existence it used to yield the "Captain" £1000 gross!

To "bishop" it was therefore a profitable custom to the senior boy, as well as joyous for his comrades and attractive to the people. For the lads it was the only holiday of the year, — actually so, since school vacations were not invented till the eighteenth century, — for the people, an opportunity to behold the rising generation in the trappings of maturity and dignity, or in the performance of more or less amusing buffoonery. It also afforded an outlet for the play-acting instinct, natural to the young of all species. And since this festival was probably as much a festival of St. Nicholas as of the Holy Innocents, some of the numerous miracles by which the genial Bishop of Myra had endeared himself to boys and girls, merchants and travellers and thieves, would, of course, be presented by the lads, in dramatic form, within or without the church. For Nicholas had been the patron of schoolboys ever since that happy day in the fourth century when some lover of marvels invented the story of how the bishop and saint had discovered in a brine-tub the bodies

of three lads who on the way to school had been murdered by the keeper of their inn; and of how he had brought the bodies back to life in spite of the fact that they were already cut into pieces, salted, and disguised as pickled pork. This was before the day of tinned meats; but the methods of the packing-houses were, even then, not above suspicion. The cleric who unearthed the scandal has never lacked votes nor been able to decline the honours thrust upon him. Guilds of St. Nicholas, as well as plays of St. Nicholas presented by them, were rife in the middle ages. The presumption is but natural that the celebration, as well as the election of the Boy Bishop or "Nicholas" Bishop, was formerly held upon his day. At Winchester the Boy Bishop was, in 1461, called *Episcopus Nicholatensis;* and of that name the Eton *Episcopus Nihilensis*, or Bishop of Nothing, of a century later, would appear to be merely a humorous corruption. As time passed, however, the authorities in most places found it convenient to amalgamate the festivities of St. Nicholas and the Holy Innocents; and hence the election on the former day of the boy who should officiate as Bishop on the latter. A Boy Bishop of such function and prerogative was elected not only in the choir-schools attached to cathedrals and important churches, but in secular schools, and in choirs connected with parish churches as well; and wherever church or school was associated with St. Nicholas the name "Nicholas Bishop" was likely to be preferred.

Turning to France,[1] we find that at Rouen the service-book for the day was practically the same as that already cited from Salisbury. At Toul, the provisions for the attendant ceremonial seem to have been somewhat more

[1] Du Cange, *Kalendæ*.

elaborate, and explicit mention is made of the presentation of plays. It is also significant that here the election of the Boy Bishop for the coming Holy Innocents' was made as early as the first Sunday in Advent; that is, just before St. Nicholas' day. The subdeacons, according to the *Statutes* of 1497, assist in the election, and with the other "Innocents," singing *Te Deum laudamus* and ringing bells, they conduct the Bishop-elect to the *cathedra* behind the altar of the Virgin and there enthrone him. On Innocents' day he performs the usual services and, in addition, riding to the monasteries of the town, offers prayer and receives from each a fee of eighteen *denarii* for its equivalent. The canons of the cathedral must year by year, according to seniority, defray the expenses of a supper, and provide the "bishop" with horse, gloves (*chirotecis*), and *biretta*. If the canon of the year, he upon whom the "bishop" of the year previous has bestowed the customary *pileum romarini* (rosemary cap) as the symbol of his appointment, fails in the performance of his duties, personally or by substitute, the boys and subdeacons are authorised to erect a scarecrow in the middle of the choir, a black cope over a rake (*raustro* for *rastro*), in mockery of him, to remain there at their pleasure. And until the offender makes amends for his contempt of the choir he is cut off from all ecclesiastical emoluments. After vespers of Innocents' day the *Episcopus Innocentium* marches with his *posse* through the streets, accompanied by mimes and trumpets. On the octave of the Innocents a similar march is had to the church of St. Genevieve, with service consisting of her antiphon and collect. Afterwards the company is entertained, at the hospital attached to the church, with cake, apples, nuts, etc.; and officers are appointed to collect all fines for

violations of discipline in connection with the performance of divine service, during the ensuing year, and to apply them to the defrayal of the expenses of the next great dinner on the day after Innocents'. On that same day every year plays were furnished, if the weather permitted: moralities or miracles or farces, and like amusements, — but they had always to be decent (*omnia cum honestate*).

Plays of Holy Innocents and St. Nicholas

Of these representations the subjects would inevitably be suggested by the occasion: hence undoubtedly the numerous notices still preserved, even outside of the great cycles, of plays of the *Massacre of the Innocents*, or, as it is sometimes phrased, of the *Children of Israel* (*Ludus Filiorum Israel*). We read of one at Cambridge, and another at Constance, at an early date. They were both, in all probability, acted by youths. Plays of St. Nicholas could readily be adapted to suit the festival of the Innocents, since intervention on behalf of the young was the characteristic rôle of the saint. His miracles would grace either feast. That they graced his own, we know. In the Fleury manuscript of the thirteenth century four such plays exist; and in one of them, which may be called *Kidnapped*, a character explicitly informs us that "to-morrow will be St. Nicholas' day, whom all Christians should devoutly cherish, venerate, and bless, *In crastino erit festivitas Nicolai.*"

The bare outline of the miracle itself is given in Voragine's legend of the saint: the Fleury play elaborates it prettily.[1] Little Deodatus accompanies his parents

1 Du Méril, *Orig. Lat. du Théâtre*, 276.

to the church of St. Nicholas, whose festival the father, Getron, was wont annually to celebrate. During the service the worshippers are attacked by the soldiers of a predatory king. Deodatus, separated from his parents, is carried off by the soldiers, and becomes cupbearer to the king. His majesty, Marmorinus, is, of course, a pagan, a worshipper of Apollo; and finding that the little cupbearer still trusts for rescue to the God of the Christians, he ridicules his prayers. By a shift of scene we are recalled to the parents. They search for the child in vain. Euphrosyne, the mother, bewails her evil fortune. Her attendant women, striving to console her, urge her to appeal to God and his dearly beloved, Nicholas. She does so. A year passes, and, with her husband, she arranges for a special feast in honour of the saint. On the day of the festival the parents and their friends are seated at table. Meanwhile, in his far distant palace, Marmorinus too is feasting in his pagan way. The little Deodatus, summoned to serve the king, sighs heavily, remembering that just one year ago he was torn from his father and mother. The king upbraids him; tears are useless; there is no rescue so long as he desires to hold him there. Then enters One in the likeness of St. Nicholas and whisks away the little cupbearer with his cup of spiced wine in his hand (*scyphum cum recentario vino tenentem*), and setting him down outside his father's house, mysteriously disappears. "Lad, whither away," says a citizen passing by, "and who gave thee that gorgeous cup all filled with wine?" "This is whither-away," replies the lad, "and no farther do I go. Praise and glory to St. Nicholas, who hath restored me." Out from the table spread with bread and wine that clerks and paupers might refresh themselves, runs the mother

to her child, and hugs him and kisses — *quem sæpius deosculatum amplexetur* — and returns thanks,—

Sintque patri nostro perpetuæ
Nicolao laudes et gratiæ,
Cujus erga Deum oratio
Nos adjuvit in hoc negotio!

And all the choir responds with the chant

Copiosæ caritatis
Nicolaë pontifex, etc.

This play was intended for performance by boys. And one may assume that the miracle of the *Three Schoolboys* restored to life by St. Nicholas, and that of the *Three Famished Girls* saved from lives of shame, and that of the *Barbarian*, or travelling Jew, contained in the same manuscript collection,[1] were intended for similar production on the festival of Santa Claus. These, like that which has preceded, are wholly in Latin, and of the simplest kind, such as youngsters could commit to memory with no feeling of resentment toward the charitable saint. Of the miracles of St. Nicholas the most amusing, however, is not all in Latin, but partly in French. It is ascribed to that Hilarius who, as we have already said, was probably an Anglo-Norman. He was of the twelfth century, and, like other cultivated ecclesiastics and schoolmasters of his day, he frequently journeyed to and fro across the Straits of Dover. His play is well known: a Barbarian (it is from another play that we learn his nationality) who is setting forth on business entrusts his treasure to the keeping of a shrine of St. Nicholas, ordering the saint, somewhat cavalierly one might say, to see to it that there shall be no cause for complaint upon

[1] All in Du Méril.

his return. As soon as the foreigner is out of sight, tramps, *fures transeuntes*, make off with the booty. "Hard luck," cries Barbarus, who had merely stepped round the corner —

Gravis sors et dura !
Hic reliqui plura,
Sed sub mala cura :
Des ! quel domage !
Qui pert la sue chose, purque n'enrage ?

"I do well to be angry. I left more than a hundred things in charge of this thief of a saint. Ha, Nicholax, if you don't disgorge my *chose*, you 'll catch it." Then up with his whip —

By God, I swear to you
Unless you "cough up" true,
You thief, I 'll beat you blue,
I will, no fear !
So hand me back my stuff that I put here!

Then St. Nicholas shall go to the robbers and say to them : "Ye wretches, what would you? When you stole the treasure committed to my care, was not I beholding you? Now I have taken a thrashing for them, and my credit is no longer worth a denier. Out with the stolen goods at once :

And if you don't do as I say,
I 'll see you both hanged in a day
On the cross in the square :
Your filching, and fobbing, and face,
Your scandalous deeds of disgrace
I 'll tell to the populace, — there !"

The robbers, fearful, bring back the goods, which when he finds, Barbarus in alternate gasps of Latin and undigested French exclaims, —

St. Nicholas and the Schoolboys

From "Ancient Mysteries Described"

Unless my sight deceives me
I 've got 'em now ;
I don't care who believes me,
'T is marvel still, I vow, —

or words to that effect. He then approaches the image of St. Nicholas, and gives thanks:

Supplex ad te venio
Nicholax ;
Nam per te recipio
Tut icei que tu gardas ;

and more. *Beatus Nicholaus*, appearing then, bids him give thanks to God alone. And the Barbarian repents of his sins and becomes a Christian, *instanter*, believing that God Almighty, whose kingdom is without end, will blot out his iniquity.

Other such miracles there are: none in English, however. But it is impossible to imagine that they did not abound in the libraries of choir-masters and classical schools. The *Golden Legend* alone furnishes subjects for a dozen or two of the children's saint, beginning even with the antedental and predisponent events of his most continent life, — "Then the first day that he was washed and bained, he addressed him," says the *Legend*, "right up in the bason, and he would not take the breast nor the pap but once on the Wednesday, and once on the Friday, and in his young age he eschewed the plays and japes of other children," — which undoubtedly accounts for his accumulated, adult sympathy with the nonsense of eternal youth.

In 1541 a proclamation of Henry VIII forbade the gathering of children for festivals of St. Nicholas, Holy Innocents, St. Catherine, St. Clement, and the like, where

boys dressed themselves up to counterfeit bishops, priests, women, and others of mature years. And from that time on, save for a space under Queen Mary, the festivals waned in importance and distinction. Still, as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century there are traces in England of a "license" on Innocents' day, by which children are allowed to play in the churches. On the continent we hear of a Bishop of Fools *or* of Innocents, until 1585, at Aix. And in 1645, at Antibes, Innocents' day was celebrated not by boys, but by Franciscans, in the old-fashioned riotous manner, with exchange of status between clergy and laymen, and of garments, — the sacerdotal vestments being turned inside out; with censing by ashes and with all the other topsy-turvydom of the Fools' Feast in the middle ages.[1] This is an absorption of the children's festival by that of the grown-up Fools. But whether independently or in connection with the Feast of Fools or that of Asses, it persists till the sixteenth century in at least a dozen cathedral towns of France. Mr. Chambers cites cases, indeed, of its continuance as late as the eighteenth century, — one at Lyons, another at Rheims; and he quotes from Chérest,[2] that even in the nineteenth at Sens, the choir boys still play at being bishops on Innocents' day, and name the "archbishop" *âne*. Odd that the latest survival should be in the cathedral from which we derive the earliest complete ritual of the Asses' Feast.

The Girl Abbess and the Nuns' Plays

If subdeacons and choir boys, not to speak of orders more elevated, had their annual excursions into joy, why

[1] Hone, from Thiers, *Traité des Jeux*, p. 449.

[2] *Fête des Innocents*, etc., p. 81.

not the cloistered nuns as well? Their devotions, fasts, and penances were even more monotonous and severe than those of subdeacons and choir boys; and they were but human after all. Not only could Chaucer's Madame Eglentyne entune the service in her nose full seemly, she could also smile and swear genteelly, and speak a certain Anglo-French, and bear herself daintily at meat, and counterfeit the cheer of court, and wear with grace her corals and her brooch:

> And sikerly she was of great disport
> And ful pleasaunt, and amiable of port.

Like Prioress, like novice, and like nun. And so we rejoice in that notice of Du Cange,[1] which informs us that the *Festum B. M. Magdalenæ* was celebrated *ludibriis atque ineptiis*, with "revels and tomfoolery," among the year-long quiet little nuns, the *moniales*, after the fashion of the Kalends among the clerics. And we entertain the somewhat sacrilegious hope that the fulmination, in 1245, of Archbishop Odo of Rouen against some of his obstreperous convents, was not too efficacious in the event. "*Item*," says he, "We forbid you in future to practise the usual follies on the festivals of Holy Innocents and St. Mary Magdalene; we mean, dressing yourselves up in the garments of seculars, and indulging in dances (*choreas ducendo*) either among yourselves or with outsiders." I have my doubts whether the little nuns of Villars, for instance, were tripping it with wantonness other than that of youthful exuberance, or at any time with persons of the other sex. The *choreæ*, aforesaid, were more probably stately evolutions in some presentation, by song and acting, of sacred history: perhaps the

[1] Under *Fest. Magd.* and *Kalendæ*.

spectacle of Rachel weeping for her children, or the aureate history of the Magdalene. Hence the assumption of unconventual garb and the co-operation of lay-folk. But again the *moniales* of the nunnery of Villars are warned by the archbishop that the songs in which they indulge on the festivals of St. John and the Innocents are scurrilous, and their jocosity too great, extending to farces, burlesque chants (*conductis*) like the Prose of the Ass, and what Mr. Leach translates "frivolous motets" (*motulis*). And they are ordered to behave "more decorously and more devoutly in the future." Perhaps the rigorous Odo was justified after all. Those "motets" have a suspicious flavour: they remind us of the crackers and fools' caps of Christmas to-day,— with their versicles of perilous rhyme! But a nun's a woman for a' that. And in England, even, it seems that a slip of a convent-girl would seize her chance to be natural at least once a year. In 1275 the Archbishop of Canterbury writes to the Abbess of Godstow that she must not suffer in her nunnery what was elsewhere permitted, *viz.* that on Innocents' day the girls should conduct the divine service.[1] There were, indeed as late as 1526, "Girl Abbesses" in England, corresponding to the Boy Bishops; for in that year a Christmas "abbess" was elected at the nunnery of Carrow. In France the election of a Girl Abbess on St. Catherine's and Holy Innocents' still obtained, at the Abbaye aux Bois, Faubourg St. Germain, as late as 1773.[2] The celebration of the Christmas *triduum* would naturally lead the women, when celebrating it, to an imitation of the excesses of deacons, priests, and choir boys; so also their celebration of the day assigned

[1] Leach, *Fortnightly*, Jan., 1896.

[2] Chambers, I, 362.

to subdeacons, New Year's or Twelfth Day or St. Hilary's — which passed into the Feast of Fools. It was inevitable that they should make of the Feast of St. Catherine, November 25, or of Mary Magdalene, July 22, a festival peculiar to themselves, with adaptations of the tripudies of their ecclesiastical brothers.

CHAPTER V

SECULAR BY-PRODUCTS IN SATIRE AND WONDER

Sottie and Farce

Of the outcome of the ecclesiastical burlesques in social and literary life a few words only can be said here. The subject has been fascinatingly discussed by Herford, Julleville, Chambers, and others. Nobody has yet exhausted it.

To the ecclesiastical ceremonials of Asses, Fools, and Boy Bishops we owe the founding of certain secular societies which prosecuted the exposure of folly with such success as to make its various shades and degrees the object of widespread consideration in the later middle ages; and to these societies is most emphatically due the development, at that time, of certain typical characters prominent in literature, dramatic and satirical. Concerning the extent to which the familiar figure of court fool and of the fool of the Elizabethan stage was influenced by these by-products of the church service it would be unsafe to hazard a guess: the question is *sub judice*, and is likely to remain there for some time yet. But that the joyous monologues of a Launcelot Gobbo, or of the Adam of the *Looking-Glass*, and the Coomes of Porter's *Two Angry Women*, derive, though unconsciously, from the *sermons joyeux* of the later "society of fools" I have no doubt.

Petit de Julleville[1] tells us that "if there is any kind of comedy whose origin is to be sought in the burlesque solemnities of the church it is the *sottie*. The *sots* are the celebrants of the Feast of Fools after they have been ejected from the church and have reorganised themselves in the public place to continue the festival. The *confrèrie* of the *sots* is the Feast of Fools secularised. For the parody of hierarchy and ecclesiastical liturgy they substitute the parody of all society." They founded all over France, and elsewhere, a number of *sociétés joyeuses:* for instance, the *Enfants sans souci* of Paris, with their officials, the *Prince des Sots* and the *Mother-Sot;* the *Connards* or *Cornards* of Dijon, and so on. They also founded societies of clerks of the *Basoche*, law-clerks attached to some one or other of the municipal parliaments. These societies were both fraternal and dramatic. Their dramatic function had the twofold aim of amusement and satire. Their satires in dramatic form, or *sotties*, ridiculed life political, social, religious, municipal, intellectual, carnal, — everything under the sun: sometimes grossly; sometimes with wit and moral force, as in the case of the *Gens Nouveaux*, where the pretensions of the young to revolutionise the civil polity are reduced to an absurdity; or as in the *Prince des Sots* of Gringore, where the simony of Pope Julius II is scourged. To the diffusion of *sotties* throughout Europe one may readily trace the crop of fool-literature that succeeded. Hence, therefore, in large part, if not entirely, proceed the *Ship of Fools*, the *Mirror of Fools*, and all such masterpieces of the Wirekers, Brandts, and Barclays, — hence also the *Hicks-corners* and similar dramatic interludes, more satiric and amusing than moral and didactic.

[1] *Le Théâtre en France*, p. 61.

Another style of literary effort cultivated by these successors of Fool Abbots and Boy Bishops was the *sermon joyeux*, or merry monologue. This, says Julleville, is born in the Feast of Fools. He who first, in the debauch of the festival, thought of mounting the pulpit and with a bacchanalian impromptu making a parody of the preacher, delivered the first *sermon joyeux*. Later the buffoon-preacher, ejected from the Church, took refuge in the theatre, and continued to parody there with impunity the religious discourse. He retained the text taken from scripture, but twisted its meaning, discussed it under sophistical headings, and mimicked shrewdly the fashion of the scholastic chair. To this monologue we may trace, as I have said, the dramatic lineage of many a fool's soliloquy of the Elizabethan stage: the mock wisdom and the sapient nonsense of Touchstones, Mileses, Slippers, and that ilk. Such monologues are, indeed, the distant source in history of the "stunts" nowadays to be heard on the vaudeville stage,—side-splitting when not heart-breaking.

From the *sotties* of the Care-free Children of France and the *farces* of the *clercs de la Basoche*, such as the immortal *Maître Pathelin* and *Pernet who Goes to the Wine*, the merry interludes of the English Heywood and Rastell undoubtedly drew, at times, inspiration, character, and incident. And similarly the "witty dialogues" of England in the early sixteenth century availed themselves of the *débats* and *disputations* of the preceding century in France.[1]

English Revels of Misrule

Orders of fools, somewhat after the French fashion, exist not only in the satiric and dramatic literature of

[1] See Pollard's "John Heywood" in *Rep. Engl. Com.*, pp. 3–16.

England during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but in society from a date earlier still. Mr. Chambers quotes from the register of Bishop Grandison "under the date July 11, 1348, a mandate to the archdeacon and dean of Exeter and the rector of St. Paul's, requiring them to prohibit the proceedings of a certain 'sect of malign men' who call themselves the 'Order of Brothelyngham.' These men," says the bishop, "wear a monkish habit, choose a lunatic fellow as abbot, set him up in the theatre, blow horns, and for day after day, beset in a great company the streets and places of the city, capturing laity and clergy, and exacting ransom from them 'in lieu of sacrifice.' This they call a *ludus*, but it is sheer rapine." Christmas maskings and mummings were common with court and guild from the latter half of the fourteenth century down, not without the grotesque garbing of fools, the local satire and the riot that characterised the *jeux des fous* across the channel. "Lords of Misrule" who are manifest kin to the *Prince des Sots* and like him descended from the *dominus*, the mock abbot or bishop or pope of the old subdeacons' feast, were regularly appointed for Christmas revels at court in the reigns of Henry VII, Henry VIII, and Edward VI. During the same period at the Universities, the yearly season of feasting and games was ruled by a Lord of Misrule — whether under the designation of King of Beans or Christmas Lord, Prince of the Revels or King of the Feast of the Nativity. And at the Inns of Court he persists as King of Cockneys, Lieutenant, or Prince of Purpoole, well into the seventeenth century. It was on one of these revels of Innocents' day, when Mr. Henry Helmes of Norfolk was Prince of Purpoole at Gray's Inn, that "a company of base and common fellows was"

brought in and performed "a *Comedy of Errors* like to Plautus his *Menæchmus*."[1] These revels of the town and college appear to be reflected in the mummers' plays of the common folk, though the latter are of much earlier and more distinctly pagan origin. Or was it the folk-festival that had affected the revels of the cultured class? Was there a connection, for instance, between the "Lord of Pool," whose name the Pickle Herring of the Revesby Plow Boys' play assumes, and this "Prince of Purpoole" of Christmastide in Gray's Inn?

The reign of the "Abbot of Bon Accord" in Aberdeen is parallel to that of the English Lords of Misrule. Sometimes he is called "Abbot of Unreason;" and from 1440 to 1565 he dominates the Haliblude plays of Christmastide, or rides with Robin Hood and Little John in honour of the Queen of May. So elsewhere in the Scotland of the sixteenth century, — at Linlithgow and Leith. Every lover of Sir Walter Scott has in mind the revels of Father Howleglas, the learned Monk of Misrule and Right Reverend Abbot of Unreason, at St. Mary's of Kennequhair, with St. George and the dragon and the lovely Sabaea, Robin Hood and Little John and hobby-horse, and the whole rout of mad grotesque mummers; and how Roland Graeme struck his poniard into the sawdust paunch of the irreverent ruler of the feast.

Of this kind of foolery we find little recorded evidence in the miracle plays, even when they have passed into the hands of the laity; but the spirit of the nonsense peeps between the lines in the Chester foolery of the "Boye and the Pigge when the kinges are gone," the "casting up" of staff and sword, and the bombast of Herod;

[1] Chambers, I, 417.

in the unwritten rubrics of Noah's recalcitrant wife, and of Balaam and his Ass; in the comic interludes of the shepherds, Trowle and Mak, and of the ale-wife whom even Christ would not harrow out of hell; in the vainglorious Watkyn of the Massacre play and in all that ebullition of the boisterous which attended the amateur performance of scriptural plays, no matter how sacred in their inception.

The Miracles de Nostre Dame

In France, the burlesque of ecclesiastical festivals resulted in the literature of crude comedy and satire of which I have spoken. The secularisation of saints' plays produced during the fourteenth century a species of dramatic literature of which no counterpart ever existed in England. I refer to the *Miracles de Nostre Dame*.[1] Of these Mary-plays an immense *Corpus* still exists, — the mummy of a mediæval Frankenstein. They are the offspring of imagination unrestrained and vulgar, superstitious beyond the wildest nightmare of paganism, mystical, sombre, romantic, disgusting, tormented, begotten of priestcraft upon ignorance. Still, though abhorrent to the religious sentiment of any age, they are priceless as the pathetic self-revelation of a perverted spirituality, as the record of an aspect of æsthetic and religious consciousness no less morbid than the contemporary ideals of the true sons of the Church were sane, elevated, and beautiful. To the historian of social phenomena the collection is an inexhaustible museum; and to the psychologist and the literary investigator a palace of surprises and of somewhat surreptitious delight.

[1] Ed. Gaston Paris et Ulysse Robert, for the Société des Anciens Textes Français, 7 vols. Paris, 1876-1893. From a manuscript of the early fifteenth century.

These Mary-plays were, as I have said, a product of the secularisation of the saints' plays. To what degree of elaboration, both heroic and farcical, a miracle of St. Nicholas might be carried had been shown already in the beginning of the thirteenth century by a poet of Arras, Jean Bodel by name. Departing from the ordinary run of miracles attributed to the saint, he invented an episode of international and religious significance, nothing other than an encounter of Christians and Mussulmans in which the Crusaders, though heartened to the fight by an angel from heaven, are defeated and with one exception left dead on the field of battle. This victory of the unbelievers fulfils part of a prophecy made by their idol before the hour of conflict. In the remainder of the prophecy the idol had foreshadowed his own doom. That is now to be fulfilled through the instrumentality of St. Nicholas. Before an image of the saint left on the field of carnage kneels the surviving Christian. Haled into the presence of the victorious king, and questioned what the object of his homage may be, he announces the singular virtue of the saint, that in his keeping all treasures are safe. The king tests the truth of the story by opening the doors of his treasury, and placing the riches therein under the sole charge of the holy image; and "Prudhomme," the Christian, sets his life on the outcome. Earlier in the play a tavern has been discovered. In it now we behold three jolly tipplers testing without stint a much-vaunted vintage: then, alas, finding no *sou* in their pockets with which to pay the shot. They resolve on rifling the king's treasury, succeed in so doing, — St. Nicholas to the contrary, notwithstanding. Back to the tavern with their chest of treasure, then more swilling of the full bowl, and then

"Miracle d'une femme que Notre Dame garda de la mer au Mont Saint-Michel"

a drunken sleep. To them thus fuddled appears the spirit of the holy Bishop and orders restitution. With due detail of plot and manners this is made: the "Prudhomme's" life is saved, St. Nicholas vindicated; the king and his court are converted, and the idol Tervagant is dispossessed and disowned.

Bodel's treatment of his theme is notable for its skilful interweaving of the heroic and the picaresque in plot, the romantic and the contemporary commonplace in manners. He uses the "wonder" not so much for religious as for æsthetic purposes, not to excuse but to enhance the elements of profane and spectacular interest. This is the characteristic also of Rutebeuf's *Théophile*, — a miracle of the end of the thirteenth century which dramatised the famous legend of how a priest sold his soul to the devil, and was converted and restored to salvation by the intercession of the Virgin Mary. Not the conscious, but the unintentional, characteristic. The *Théophile* aims to exalt the worship of the Virgin; but the *Théophile* and the collective Miracles of Our Lady existed and persisted because the crowd found delight in legends and romances which in their human interest had, generally speaking, nothing to do with the scriptural or ecclesiastical history of the mother of Jesus Christ.

The Mariolatry of the eleventh century had, as Creizenach says,[1] produced by the beginning of the twelfth a host of stories of the miraculous intervention of the Virgin on behalf of the afflicted who venerated her, or of the wanton, lawless, or criminal who, repentant, placed themselves under her protection. By the end of the fourteenth century many of these stories, some, indeed, from the apocryphal gospels and the legends of the

[1] *Geschichte des neueren Dramas*, I, p. 143.

saints, but more from mediæval *chansons des gestes*, *fabliaux*, and romances familiar to common folk or courtly circle, had found their way into dramatic form, and were presented before large audiences, not only in Paris, but in various provincial cities, by the Puys or semi-religious, semi-artistic associations of the several localities. Under colour of the worship of the Virgin, these fraternities made their music, recited and sang their rondels of extravagant but often exquisite adoration, and produced their Miracles of the Mother of our Lord. In them she is helpless no longer, no longer broken-hearted or even pathetic, but victorious, majestic, magical, and gracious, — a vision of superhuman chastity and beauty: a fusion of faëry-queen and saint and Goddess, as unconscious frequently as the first of a moral law, or as the second of a physical, or as the third of any kind of limitation in the performance of a superhuman desire.

The subjects of the plays are sometimes heroic, but more often simply human; they are always of the kind that moves the heart and stirs the blood of country-folk; the characters are historical or pseudo-historical, legendary, or poetically invented; the time is careless of chronology, and the scene of distance and locality; the manners are of the day of the composition, and so are the details; but the spirit is romantic in the zenith. The atmosphere is surcharged and sultry, save when relieved by some rare flash of satire. There is little of the real comic, and less of the permanently tragic: for conciliation is very easy, repentance is to change your jerkin or your stomacher, and atonement is a dose of ecclesiastical salts and senna.

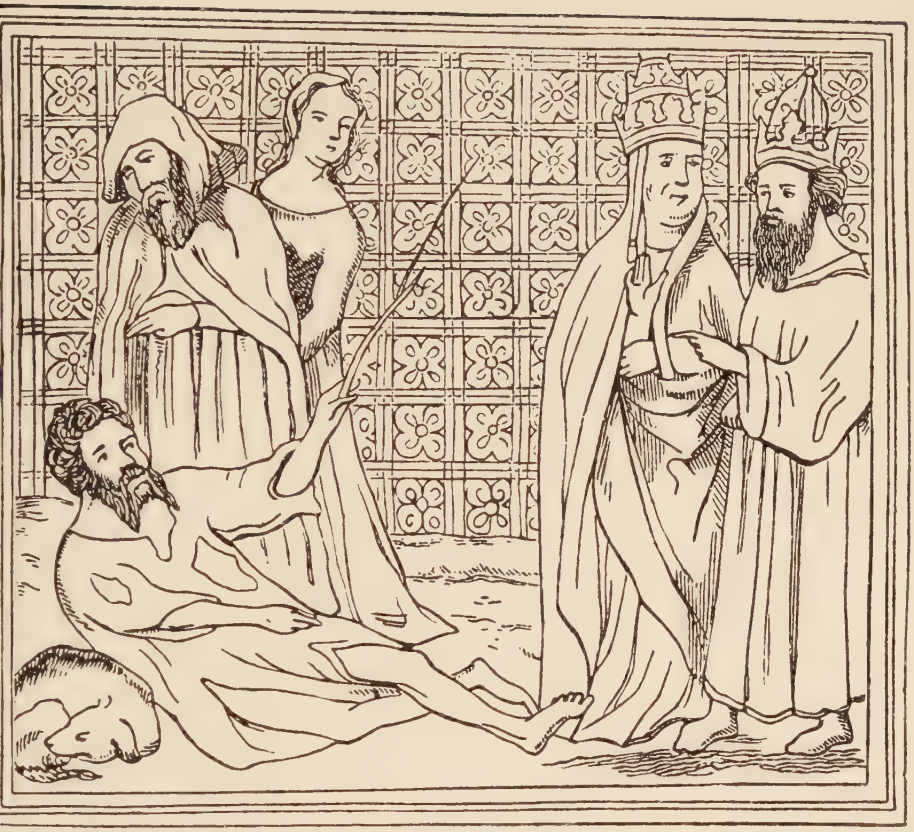
Of how *Nôtre Dame* succours the afflicted or the wrongly accused, among her worshippers, the following

are examples. Once a citizen's wife, long childless, had been blessed with a son in answer to her prayers directed to the Virgin. Exhausted by the pains of child-birth, she falls asleep while bathing the babe, and he is drowned in the tub. The mother is accused of child-murder and condemned to the stake. But the husband prays before a picture of the Virgin; she descends from heaven and comforts him; and when the mother, about to be burned, begs for one last look at her child, it is restored to life in her arms! Such also is the story of the Marquise de la Gaudine, who, by the accusation of her husband's uncle, to whom her husband had entrusted her during his absence from home, is tried for unfaithfulness to her marriage vow, and condemned to burn; but by the command of Our Lady, whose votary the Marquise was, the husband fought *à l'outrance* with his false uncle and defeated him, and so established the innocence of his wife. And again, there is the miracle of the Bishop, who for his faith in the august merit of Our Lady was banished to the desert, and there buffeted by many devils, who left him for dead; but the Mother of God appeared to him faint and perishing for thirst, and gave him a golden vessel filled with milk from her own breasts: "Plain est du lait," she says —

> "Plain est du lait de mes mamelles
> Dont le fil Dieu vierge allaitay!"

And again, the marvellous escape of the *prevost*, whom, at the request of St. Pris, her worshipper, the Virgin delivered from Purgatory. And the story of how the Princess Isabel, parading in man's garb and armour, is disengaged from a very embarrassing situation, by being temporarily transformed to a man!

Of the grace of the Virgin to repentant sinners we have stories even more astounding — to the moral sense at any rate, if not to the physical or the religious. Of how an Abbess, painfully strict with her nuns, falls in love with her clerk, Perrot; and of how, when she is with child by him and is to be tried by the Bishop, she calls upon Our Lady for help, and is not only delivered of the child by miracle, but by some juggle of moral probability is promoted, after a lime-light repentance, to a higher position in the church than she had held before. Says the Bishop: "It appears, indeed, that you are a holy woman; and therefore I wish you to be mistress of the Abbey of Mons: you shall no longer be abbess here; it is too mean an estate for such as you!" Or again, of how the wife of the king of Portugal kills the seneschal of the king and her own female cousin, for which she is condemned to burn, and how when she has turned — this double-dyed murderess — in a gush of penitence, to the Virgin, Our Lady preserves her. And of the many misdeeds of Robert the Devil, and of his penance, and how Our Lady takes pity upon him, secures forgiveness for him, and has him married to the emperor's daughter. A still more edifying instance of romantic justice is afforded by the miracle of St. John the Hairy, a hermit who, tempted by the devil, seduces a princess and then throws her down a deep well. After seven years of penance, spent in crawling through the forest on all fours, he is caught like some wild animal by the king's huntsmen and taken before his majesty, the father of the lost princess. As the inquiry is beginning, a new-born babe identifies the "hairy" as a saint and calls on him for baptism. This incident in his favour, — John confesses; and the king, with all the sentimental noncha-



Robert the Devil at the Emperor's Court
From "A History of Theatrical Art"

lance of Shakespeare's worst comedy-heroes, forgives him on the sufficient ground that God has done so already. God and Our Lady show their high esteem by descending from heaven and helping the hirsute hypocrite to raise the princess from her seven year's decomposition. She comes up smiling at her seducer's call; and he is rewarded with a bishopric!

Other interesting miracles are that of St. Jehan: "Cy commence un miracle de Nostre Dame de Saint Jehan Crisothomes et de Anthure, sa mère, conment un roy lui fist couper le poing et Nostre Dame lui refist une nouvelle main," — a modern version of Joseph and Potiphar's wife; and that of the nun who left her abbey to elope with a knight. After they had had two beautiful children, *Nôtre Dame* appeared to her, whereupon she returned to the abbey; and he became a monk, abandoning with the utmost equanimity the children whom she had asked him to care for:

> "Dame, je sçay bien qu'ilz sont notres:
> En la garde Dieu les lairay."

If I mistake not, this is the basis of Maeterlinck's *Sister Beatrice*, and John Davidson's *Nun*. There is also an example of Our Lady's retributive anger in the story of the mother of a pope who was so swollen with pride for him and her two other sons who were cardinals, that she thought herself greater than Our Lady. And so she was punished and then forgiven by the Mother of Grace.

Though these subjects of imaginative or historic fiction, and of fictitiously embroidered history, offered far wider scope than did the subjects of the scriptural mysteries for deploying character, developing technique,

and enhancing the various æsthetic kinds of interests, it would be hard, as Petit de Julleville has told us, to indicate with precision any dramatic progeny of their distinctive type. They are the mirage of an overheated emotional atmosphere. Though romantic, they lack artistic truth and humour. They yielded place to the drama of more serious intent and more genuine humour provided by the mysteries, and to that of satiric purpose, realistic method, and biting wit which was the offspring of the Christmas *triduum*, the farce of the confraternities of fools.

CHAPTER VI

THE TRANSITION OF LITURGICAL PLAYS

From Church to Guild

With the miraculous Mary-plays of France, the English miracle plays are not to be confounded. Like the French *mystères*, their material is primarily scriptural; their origin, as we have seen, is liturgical.

Mr. Leach, in his contribution to the *Furnivall Miscellany* on English Plays and Players, says that from first to last, both at Lincoln and at Beverley, "the miracle plays were in the hands of the civic authorities and the craft guilds, assisted, of course, by the secular clergy, but with no mention of monks or regular canons," and again that the origin of the English play must be sought in the same quarters, not "in country monasteries and among the religious, professionally so called." To prove this, he relates the account, from a writer of about 1220, of a contemporary representation of the Lord's Resurrection, already quoted in this book. That representation was given, *as usual*, by masked performers, not in the church but in the churchyard, "a customary institution, therefore, long before the foundation of the feast of *Corpus Christi* led to the concentration in one play of the various religious dramas already presented to the public." Mr. Leach is probably right in concluding that since there were no monks in Beverley or near it, this was

not a monkish play. But this isolated instance of about 1220 does not prove, nor do Mr. Leach's instances of municipal control from the middle of the next century, that the regular clergy, *i.e.*, monks and friars, had nothing to do with the origin of the English play ; nor that the plays at Lincoln and Beverley were from first to last in the hands of the civic authorities, merely "assisted" by the secular clergy. These two towns do not stand for all England; and all that is proved is that, in these towns, as we already knew was the case in other towns, the guilds had control of the plays after the middle of the fourteenth century ; and that as early as 1220 the Resurrection Play, evidently of the kind ordinarily acted in the church, is acted in the churchyard for lack of room in the ecclesiastical edifice. It is reasonable to suppose that this play was written by the secular clergy, not the people, and that, if any assistance in acting was given at all, it was given by the people to the clergy, and not *vice versa.*

Of course, the popular development of the miracle plays was largely due to their representation *extra fores* at an early period in their career, and to the speedy co-operation of laymen and the gradual control by the municipality. But we cannot be at all sure that monks did not sometimes participate in the preparation of these plays. For not to speak of the internal evidence of occasional ecclesiastical authorship, which may as probably have been monkish as not, we have at this day dramatic offices which were written and used by monks both before and after the conquest; we know that it was found necessary, according to the *Annales Burtonenses*, to forbid abbots and monks, as early as 1258, to witness plays (if the plays were profane, that is but a stronger indi-

cation of monastic fondness for the art); and we are told that a Carmelite friar called Robert Baston was a well-known playwright in 1314, and that one William Melton of the Friars Minors was, in 1426, most influential in the regulation of the *Corpus Christi* plays at York. The latter is denominated in the city registers *Professor Paginæ Sacræ*, which I would still persist in translating Professor of Holy Pageantry, although a critic of my *Historical Account of English Comedy* [1] asserts that the *Sacra Pagina* could not possibly have been anything but "Holy Writ." Considering that numerous manuscript pageants close with the words *Explicit Pagina*, one cannot readily abandon the surmise that Melton was one of those who from time to time (like Robart Croo of Coventry), revised, or perhaps even composed, *paginæ* for the public. What contribution, if any, this eloquent preacher made to the York cycle we do not know, nor whether Baston contributed. The latter was of Scarborough, and a man of note, for he accompanied Edward II on his expedition into Scotland; and it is recorded by Bale that he was the author not only of poems and rhymes, but of *Tragædiæ et Comædiæ Vulgares*. Of course, these may have been narratives; otherwise, I suspect with Collier that plays in the vulgar written by a friar would most probably be miracles. The story of Higden's connection with the Chester plays as author, translator, or adapter, has recently received additional confirmation. And it is not at all unlikely that another monk, Sir Henry Francis, added to them, or revised. But while we need not accept vague rumours of monkish authorship, accumulated evidence would certainly indicate its occasional existence. These considerations make me

[1] *Athenæum*, Aug. 1, 1903.

chary of eliminating monkish participation altogether; also of accepting the conjecture of municipal control "from first to last."

To the secular clergy is undoubtedly due most of the credit for popularising the religious spectacles. The *Manuel de Pechiez* of the first half of the thirteenth century attributes not only the contrivance but the acting of miracles to "*les fous clers*," who performed them not only for purposes of devotion in the church, which was permissible, but, which was reprehensible, before crowds in public squares and churchyards; and Robert le Brunne, in his English version of the *Manuel* in 1303, holds up for like reprobation the acting of such sacred subjects "by clerks of the order" on the public ways and greens. It was a sacrilege to convert the mysteries of the passion, properly represented in the church for purposes of devotion, to material of amusement and unholy gain. From the beginning of the second quarter of the fourteenth century mention is still frequently made in contemporary literature of miracles as "clerkes pleis" and of clerks as actors in them. I have no doubt that about this period, if not somewhat earlier, the guilds were beginning to co-operate with the clergy in processional pageants, and possibly in formal plays, of the *Corpus Christi;* but as yet guilds had nothing like complete control. As late as 1378 we find a close religious corporation, that of the scholars and choristers of St. Paul's, resisting the encroachment of laymen upon their privilege of enacting Old Testament histories at Christmas time; and the corporation appears to have been successful.

Whether monks at any time had a hand in the inception or performance of these plays may remain an open

question. We may be sure, however, that the craft plays as we have them are the result of collaboration through generations by the secular clergy of collegiate churches, parish clerks, town clergy, town clerks, secular clerks of the universities, and grammar-school masters,[1] and by the occasional guild playwright and the craftsman improviser. Such participation as the cloistered orders may have had is more than counterbalanced by the long-continued collaboration of the secular and the lay.

It must not be supposed, however, that after the industrial crafts had taken them up these miracles ceased to be cultivated by the clerical and semi-clerical orders, or to be acted in ecclesiastical precincts. The guild of which we first are informed that its functions were to cultivate processional and artistic as well as devotional and philanthropic ends was semi-clerical rather than secular. It is that of the Parish Clerks of London, incorporated by Henry III about 1240. Of these clerks, Hone, in his *Ancient Mysteries*, says that they were under the patronage of St. Nicholas, and that it was an essential part of their profession not only to sing, but to read, — an accomplishment almost solely confined to the clergy; so that, on the whole, they seem to come under the denomination of a semi-religious fraternity. "It was anciently customary," Hone tell us, "for men and women of the first quality, ecclesiastics and others who were lovers of church music, to be admitted into this corporation; and they gave large gratuities for the support and education of many persons in the practice of that science. Their public feasts were frequent, and celebrated with song and music." According to Warton their profession, employment, and character naturally dictated to this spiritual

[1] See Leach, *Furn. Misc.*, p. 233.

brotherhood the representation of plays, especially those of the spiritual kind. We do not know how early this semi-religious guild took to acting; but it is certain that in 1391 they had been playing cyclic miracles at Skinners' Well (Clerkenwell) for many years, since they enjoyed, at that time and place, the presence of the king, queen, and nobles of the realm during a performance which was of great *éclat* and lasted for three days. In 1409 the Clerkenwell plays were still so popular that "most part of the nobility and gentry of England" attended during a dramatic cycle which lasted eight days. It is noteworthy that Stow, the historian, calls these interludes at Skinners' Well of 1391 an "example of later time," informing us that "of *old* time" the parish clerks of London were accustomed yearly to assemble at Clerkes' Well near by, "and to play some large history of Holy Scripture." Since Clerkenwell is mentioned by Fitzstephen in his description of London as a place frequented by scholars and youth, I think it practically certain that the sacred plays of which he elsewhere speaks as acted in London, between 1170 and 1182, were played then by these parish clerks and at the same place.

As to the purely industrial guilds, we have earlier mention of their participation in secular than in religious processions and the pageants that attended them. "Triumphant shows," as Stow calls the "royal entries" into London and other great towns, consisted of processions in which some citizens rode and others presented "pageants and strange devices." Davidson, in his *English Mystery Plays*, argues that these pageants were, in England as in France, stationary, and so continued until the sixteenth century. But most of his examples are drawn from France. While the pageants in 1236 in London for

A Pageant
From "An English Miscellany"

Eleanor of Provence may have been stationary, those in 1293 for Edward I were presented by the guild of fishmongers, moving through the streets. Of the pageants in 1377 for Richard II, some were progressive, others stationary. I see nothing to prove that such pageants were, in England, taken from the Bible story at an earlier date than 1430, though they may have been to some extent in France. As to the dramatic quality of the shows, though they were at first, after the fashion of the French, *bas-reliefs* of living figures, they rapidly took on the braver qualities of the mumming and masking; and as to the mumming and masking, we know that they before long added to themselves speech and gesticulation like the regular drama. Lydgate, for instance, accompanied with verses the allegorical pageants for Mayings and royal entries in 1430 and after. It is largely because the guilds of the city could not well afford to support religious plays in addition to these expensive shows, that the London of those days did not contribute as much to the development of the religious drama as did the provinces.

The procession out of which grew most of the cyclic craft-plays was, as we know, that of *Corpus Christi*. In this gorgeous religious parade both clergy and laity marched, and in the pageants representing the principal events in sacred history, they undoubtedly at first co-operated — a powerful means for the secularisation of the scriptural drama. These pageants, falling more exclusively into the hands of the crafts, must have gained in importance so rapidly as to imperil the success of the procession itself. For we notice that in 1327, only sixteen years after the re-enforcement of the *Corpus Christi* celebration by the Council of Vienne, there was founded in London a fraternity of *Corpus Christi* of the Skinners'

Company, the express function of which was to foster the religious procession. Semi-religious guilds similar to that of the London Skinners are recorded as existing in Coventry, Cambridge, and in Leicester 1348-9. In York, it was not until 1426 that the pageants displayed by the industrial guilds or crafts were finally separated from the religious processions. That the semi-religious fraternities did not, however, confine themselves to processional activity appears from the history of the Parish Clerks of London. It is thought by some, indeed, that the *Ludus Filiorum Israel*, Cambridge, 1350, was acted by the *Corpus Christi* guild of that town, but I agree with Davidson and his authorities that it was more likely a school play. The next religious plays, acted by the crafts, of which I have been able to find notice are the *Corpus Christi* cycles of Beverley, in 1377, and of York, in 1378, and the *Paternoster Play* of York, in 1384, acted by a special fraternity; but at those dates the plays were evidently of long standing. Though we cannot trust the traditional attribution of the Chester plays to 1268, it is probable, as I have elsewhere shown, that the popular presentation of them was in the hands of the guilds before 1352, and maybe as early as 1327. We must not imagine, however, that the church took its hand altogether off the plays. In many places the clergy of the collegiate church or cathedral continued to co-operate as a guild; for instance, the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln Cathedral as late as 1483.[1]

Whitsuntide and Corpus Christi

So long as these dramas were given within the church, they could, of course, be presented, at any season of the

[1] Leach, *Furn. Misc.*, p. 225.

year and on the appropriate festival. But when they began to pass from the church to the court in front, and to the churchyard and street and public green, the consideration of climate influenced the choice of season. We hear of plays presented out of doors even in the winter at a few places: for instance, the plays of the scholars of St. Paul's, about 1378, which were given "publickly" by the clergy at Christmas, and sometimes, probably, in the yard; and plays performed at Christmas in Chester, several times during the sixteenth century. Of processional guild plays of the Nativity presented on Candlemas (February 2), in Aberdeen, we have records running from 1442 to 1533; and at other places of out-door Easter plays even when Easter fell early in the year. But, in general, the holy days of late spring and of summer were naturally preferred for such events; and individual plays, and cycles in part or in whole, are recorded as occurring in various districts at such clement seasons as Holy Cross day (May 3), St. John Baptist day (June 24), St. Anne's day (July 26), St. Bartholomew's day (August 24), during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. The favourite season, however, from the beginning of the fourteenth century, for sacred representations in England as well as Italy, was Whitsuntide; and in Chester the cyclic miracles were commonly called Whitsun plays, even during the sixteenth century, though they may have been played in the fourteenth and fifteenth on *Corpus Christi*. In New Romney, also, during the fifteenth century, and in Norwich during the sixteenth, Whitsuntide continued to be the season of miracles.

After Pope Clement V at the Council of Vienne, in 1311, had revived the purpose of Urban IV, and made

a universal Christian feast of *Corpus Christi* — the Thursday after Trinity Sunday — that came to be, broadly on the continent, and especially in England, the day for pageants of Christian history and belief. For various reasons: the festival celebrates the central, most concrete and most dramatic conception of the liturgical service, — the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament; it seizes also the most thrilling moment for commemoration, — the elevation of the consecrated Host, the sacrifice made for man; it provides that the Host be borne in monstrance with all pomp, dignity, and ceremony out from the Holy of Holies and through the streets of the city; it rejoices in a mass and office as beautiful as they are appropriate and imposing, — a liturgy fashioned by three of the most poetic ecclesiastics of a most poetic pope-ritualist of a century steeped in mystic contemplation, creative of symbol and gorgeous with ceremonial. John of Mount Cornelio originated the service, St. Bonaventura and St. Thomas Aquinas revised it. From the last of these, the Seraphic Doctor, alone, it received its final form, its inimitable "Lauda Sion" and its exquisite hymns; and from Urban IV its extension to the church catholic. The festival stirred the sense both of civic solidarity and of that wider communion of the saints which is the church universal. Archbishop and acolyte, cleric and layman, mayor and craftsman, not of one city or diocese or province, but of every corner of the spiritual principality of the catholic world, on that day marched in ecstatic procession to honour the church invisible, visible in the flesh, — the God incarnate, manifest in the Host. History and prophecy were fused in one moment, and that the present. The season, too, was the most propitious of the year, — the end of May or within the first four and twenty days of June. It was

but natural, therefore, that the guilds taking part in this annual solemnity, rivalling one the other in the demonstration of industrial splendour and civic pride, should gradually undertake to present in pantomimic pageant or dumb-show some part of that scriptural history which all were celebrating, and to present it by a scene appropriate to the function of the individual guild. And it was but a question of time that these "pageants" or floats upon wheels, should become the stage for acting and speaking performers of plays formerly liturgical, but now rapidly assuming popular features and vernacular speech.

After 1311, then, the collective miracles, whether played on this eventful day or not, were generally called *Corpus Christi* plays; in many parts of England, north and south, they were, indeed, performed upon that day: in York, for instance, for two hundred years beginning with 1378, — during the first fifty in connection with the ecclesiastical procession, — after that separately, the procession being deferred to the next day; in Beverley from about the same date of beginning till 1520, — from Richard II to Henry VIII; in Ipswich, sometimes procession, sometimes plays, from 1325 till 1520; also at Bungay and Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk; in Newcastle from the fourth year of Henry VI to the third of Elizabeth, and in Kendal of Westmoreland as late as 1612. In Coventry, also, in Wakefield or its neighbourhood, in Lancaster and Louth, Preston, Salisbury, Worcester, and other places, of which lists have been given by Miss Lucy Toulmin Smith and Mr. Chambers, the plays were long acted on that day. Of course, the custom was not uniform. In Aberdeen, as I have said, the play-seasons were Candlemas for the Nativity, and *Corpus Christi* for

the "Halyblude" or Passion; in Dublin, for processions and sometimes plays, St. George's day (April 23), and *Corpus Christi;* and at Chelmsford, Midsummer day. In Lincoln the play-season varied; but after 1500 it generally fell on the day of St. Anne.

CHAPTER VII

THE SECULAR REPRESENTATION OF THE ENGLISH CYCLES

Regulation by the Crafts

Concerning the regulation of the *Corpus Christi* plays, various notices are extant. Mr. Leach says of the Beverley: "Among the digests and orders is an Ordinance of the Play of Corpus Christi in 1390. It was then 'ordered by the whole community that all the craftsmen (*artifices*) of Beverley, *viz.* Mercers, Tanners, Masons,' and thirty-three other companies of trades or mysteries [*ministeria*, *misteria*, trades] 'shall have their plays and pageants ready henceforth on every Corpus Christi Day in fashion and form according to the ancient customs of the town of Beverley, to play in honour of the Body of Christ, under the penalty of 40 shillings for every craft that fails.'" This is evidently a re-enactment of an old law. "Certain it is that the crafts themselves had long before taken an official part in the Corpus Christi Play. For another Order recites how in 1377 the Keepers of the Town and the Tailors consented in the Gild Hall 'that all the Tailors of Beverley should be personally present at the yearly accounts made of their pageants of the Play of Corpus Christi, and in their castle on Monday in the Rogation Days; but any free tailor, not in the livery of the craft, should pay to the expenses of the

castle only.' The castles were wooden stages in which the crafts sat to see the procession of the shrine of St. John of Beverley go by on Monday in Rogation week." Elsewhere Mr. Leach gives a list of the *Gubernacio Ludi Corporis Christi* from the original on the fly-leaf of the Great Gild Book, — beginning with the Tylers and the Fallinge of Lucifer, the Saddelers and the Making of the World; and ending with the Prestes and the Coronation of Our Lady; the Merchaunts and Domesday. Thirty-five acts in all, as compared with fifty-seven at York in 1415; thirty-two at Wakefield in the reign of Henry VI; forty-two at Coventry, and twenty-five at Chester in the last decade of the sixteenth century. "Some attempt," he says, "was made to adapt the character of the scene to be performed to the nature of the craft carried on by the performers. Thus the Priests at Beverley (as at Lincoln) presented The Coronation of the Virgin while the Cooks everywhere performed The Harrying of Hell, called 'the coks pageant' because they were in the habit of taking things out of the fire; and the Watermen found the Ark, or Noe's Shippe; the Bakers the maundy (the Last Supper on the Thursday of Passion Week, when Christ gave his last 'mandate' to the disciples)." I don't find, by the way, that the Cooks everywhere played *The Harrowing:* they did n't in York. But the attempt at appropriate distribution was undoubtedly made. In York a certain humorous affinity of guild and play leaps to the eye, as when the Shipwrights devote themselves to the *Construction of the Ark*, the Fishmongers to *The Flood*, the Chandlers to the *Shepherds and the Star*, the Goldcrafts to the *Three Kings*, the Nailors and Sawyers to the *Massacre of the Innocents*, and the Barbers to the *Baptism of Jesus*. The system

of co-operation among the guilds obtained in nearly all places where such cycles were performed: in Chester, Coventry, Newcastle, Lincoln, etc. In Lincoln, however, the cathedral chapter always retained an active connection with the performance, and the Guild of St. Anne directed; while in London the presentation was in the hands, generally speaking, not of crafts at all, but of the clerks in minor orders, especially those of the Guild of St. Nicholas.

The right to present a certain subject by way of a play on *Corpus Christi* day was granted to the guild by the municipality, and for the proper performance of its function the guild was responsible to the corporation under penalty of fine. "According to the Annals," says Mr. Chambers,[1] "part of the charges of the plays was met (in Coventry) by the enclosure of a piece of 'common' land (possibly to build pageant houses upon). Otherwise they fell wholly upon the crafts, to some one of which every artisan in the town was bound to become contributory for the purpose. The principal crafts were appointed by the Leet to produce the pageants; and with each were grouped minor bodies liable only for fixed sums, varying from 3*s.* 4*d.* to 16*s.* 8*d.* In 1501 an outside craft, the Tilemakers of Stoke, is found contributing 5*s.* to a pageant." Of external contribution and co-operation there are in Wakefield and elsewhere many examples. "These combinations of crafts varied considerably from time to time. Within the craft the necessary funds were raised, in part at least, by special levies. Strangers taking out their freedom were sometimes called upon for a contribution. Every member of the craft paid his 'pagent pencys.' In several crafts the levy was 1*s.*"

[1] *Med. St.*, II, 358–359.

As the performances, because of civic pride or guild rivalry, grew in size, length, and magnificence, the expense became more and more burdensome; and we consequently note frequent entries of fines imposed upon neglectful or rebellious companies, and of petitions from some crafts for amalgamation with others more wealthy, or for entire relief. "In 1539 the mayor of Coventry, writing to Cromwell, told him that the poor commoners were at such expense with their plays and pageants that they fared the worse all the year after." In numerous instances individuals are fined for neglect of duty in respect of the annual plays. Several cases from Beverley are cited by Mr. Leach. "On June 18, 1450, five fishers were made to put down 8*s.* each for not playing their play on Corpus Christi Day, and ordered to have their pageant ready by Palm Sunday next at the latest. On May 24, 1452, Henry Cowper, a 'webster' or weaver, because he did not know his part (*nesciebat ludum suum*) on Corpus Christi Day, in spite of the proclamation by the common bellman, forfeited 6*s.* 8*d.* to the commonalty." He had only 3*s.* 4*d.*; so they took the fourpence and warned him not to forget his lines another time. Fortunate Henry! In 1456 the Dyers are threatened because they were not ready with their pageant, which was to have come first in the cycle. And in 1459 the Butchers had a narrow escape of a 40*s.* fine for being tardy with their play. In 1520–21, the alderman of the painters, Richard, fitly surnamed Trollopp, got a pecuniary trouncing from the governors because this company's play, *The Three Kings of Cologne* (*Magi*), was badly and confusedly played in contempt of the whole community, *before many strangers*." This must have been a source of peculiar mortification to the Pro-

motion Committee of the town of Beverley, especially as that committee, consisting of the Board of Governors, had "spent no less than 45*s.* 3*d.* on themselves and other gentlemen at the time of the Corpus Christi Play." Mr. Leach cynically concludes that the fines were a set-off for the bill at the tavern. The Coventry Leet Book and Records indicate that a similarly significant share of the public moneys went to assuage thirst, — not only of pageant-drawers, and actors between station and station, but of the magnificoes. Those inland towns are really very warm between Whitsuntide and *Corpus Christi.*

That a company was wont to entrust the management of its pageant to some responsible person is shown by occasional entries in their books; for instance, in Beverley, 1391, when John of Arras, a "hayrer," gave surety for himself and his fellow craftsmen "to play a play called *Paradise* . . . during his life, at his proper cost"; and in Coventry, 1453, when Thomas Colclow, a skinner, arranged with the Smiths to have the rule of their pageant for twelve years; the keepers of the craft to dine with Colclow every Whitsun week, each master to pay him 4*d.*, and he, Colclow, to have 46*s.* 8*d.*, yearly for his labour; and in 1591, at Coventry, when Cappers, Mercers, and Drapers made a similar arrangement with a gentleman of some standing in the community, a certain Thomas Massye, who describes himself as "a branche of the Barony and Knighthood of Massyes Dunham in Cheshire." [1]

Methods of Presentation

On June 26, 1449, it was ordered in Beverley "that the pageants of Corpus Christi be assigned to

[1] Sharp, *A Dissertation on the Pageants or Dramatic Mysteries, anciently performed at Coventry*, pp. 15, 75.

be played as under: *viz.* at the North Bar; by the Bull-ring; between John Skipworth and Robert Couke in Highgate; at the Cross Bridge; at the Fishmarket; at the Minster Bow, and at the Beck. Similar directions concerning the successive stations for pageants are preserved in the annals of York[1] and of other municipalities.

The manner of presentation of the cyclic miracles by the crafts or guild-companies of the town is, however, best given in an account written by Archdeacon Rogers, who died in 1595, and saw the Whitsun plays performed at Chester in the preceding year. The account is quoted by Wright in his edition of the Chester plays, and has been reprinted by nearly every writer on the subject. I must therefore be pardoned for repeating it anew; but I do not see how the reader can dispense with it.

"The time of the year they were played," says he, "was on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday in Whitsun week. The manner of these plays were, every company had his pageant or part, which pageants were a high scaffold with two rooms, a higher and a lower, upon four wheels. In the lower they apparelled themselves, and in the higher room they played, being all open on the top, that all beholders might hear and see them. The places where they played them was in every street. They began first at the abbey gates; and when the first pageant was played, it was wheeled to the High Cross before the mayor, and so to every street; and so every street had a pageant playing before them at one time. And when one pageant was ended, word was brought from street to street, that so they might come in place thereof, exceeding orderly; and all the streets have their pageants afore them,

[1] Drake's *History of York*.

all at one time, playing together. To see which plays was great resort; and also scaffolds and stages made in the streets in those places where they determined to play their pageants." Again, elsewhere, the Archdeacon says: "The manner of which plays was thus: they were divided into twenty-four pageants, according to the companies of the city; and every company brought forth their pageant, which was the carriage or place which they played in. And they first began at the Abbey gates, and when the first pageant was played at the Abbey gates, then it was wheeled from thence to Pentice, at the High Cross, before the mayor; and before that was done the second came, and the first went into the Watergate Street, and from thence into the Bridge Street; and so, one after another till all the pageants were played, appointed for the first day; and so likewise for the second and the third day. These pageants or carriages was a high place made like a house with two rooms, being open on the top: the lower room they apparelled and dressed themselves [in], and [in] the higher room they played. And they stood upon six wheels. And when they had done with one pageant in one place, they wheeled the same from one street to another."

Archdeacon Rogers describes the pageant as having but two "rooms." Strutt, however, in his *Manners and Customs*, says that in the beginning of miracle playing "what is now called the stage did consist of three platforms or stages, raised one above the other: on the uppermost sat the *Pater Cælestis*, surrounded with his angels; on the second appeared the holy saints and glorified men; and the last and lowest was occupied by mere men, who had not yet passed from this transitory life to the regions of eternity. On one side of this

lowest platform was the resemblance of a dark pitchy cavern, from whence issued appearance of fire and flames; and when it was necessary the audience was treated with hideous yellings and noises, as imitative of the howlings and cries of the wretched souls tormented by the relentless demons. From this yawning cave the devils themselves constantly ascended to delight and to instruct the spectators: to delight, because they were usually the greatest jesters and buffoons that then appeared; and to instruct, for that they treated the wretched mortals who were delivered to them with the utmost cruelty, warning thereby all men carefully to avoid the falling into the clutches of such hardened and remorseless spirits. But in the more improved state of the theatre, and when regular plays were introduced, all this mummery was abolished, and the whole cavern and devils, together with the highest platform before mentioned, entirely taken away," leaving the upper and lower stages as described by Archdeacon Rogers. Strutt gives no authority for his three platforms; and, as Thomas Sharp has said in his famous *Dissertation on the Coventry Mysteries*, he must have had reference to a fixed stage such as was ordinarily used in France. The description would not conform to the needs of a movable pageant. Still, there may have been for exceptional plays distinct and exceptional forms of vehicle; and in some parts of England — Cornwall, for instance — the performance was stationary.

Of the latter arrangement the following account is given by Edwin Norris[1]: "We have no notice of the performance of the Cornish plays earlier than that of Richard Carew, whose survey of Cornwall was first printed in 1602. In his time they were played in regu-

[1] *Ancient Cornish Drama*, II, 453.

A Pageant
From "An English Miscellany"

lar amphitheatres, and the account he gives is well worth extracting, as it affords a vivid picture by one who was in all probability an eyewitness, over three centuries ago. 'The Guary miracle, in English, a miracle play, is a kinde of Enterlude, compiled in Cornish out of some scripture history, with that grosseness which accompanied the Romanes *vetus Comedia*. For representing it, they raise an earthen amphitheatre in some open field, having the Diameter of his enclosed playne some 40 or 50 foot. The Country people flock from all sides, many miles off, to hear and see it; for they have therin, devils and devices, to delight as well the eye as the eare; the players conne not their parts without bookes, but are prompted by one called the Ordinary, who followeth at their back with the booke in his hand, and telleth them softly what they must pronounce allowd. Which manner once gave occasion to a pleasant conceyted gentleman, of practicing a merry pranke: for he undertaking (perhaps of set purpose) an actor's roome, was accordingly lessoned (beforehand) by the Ordinary, that he must say after him. His turn came: quoth the Ordinary, Goe forth man, and shew thyselfe. The Gentleman steps out upon the stage, and like a bad clarke in scripture matters, cleaving more to the letter than the sense, pronounced those words allowd. Oh, sayes the fellowe softly, you marre all the play. And with this his passion, the actor makes the audience in like sort acquainted. Hereon the prompter falles to flat rayling and cursing in the bitterest terms he could devise: which the Gentleman with a set gesture and countenance still soberly related, untill the Ordinary, driven at last into a madde rage, was faine to give over all. Which trousse, though it brake off the Enterlude, yet defrauded not the beholders, but

dissmissed them with a great deale more sport and laughter, then 20. such Guaries could have afforded.'"

The plan of a huge Cornish amphitheatre for stationary miracles is given by Dr. Borlase in his *Natural History of Cornwall*, published in 1758. "It exhibits," says Mr. Norris, "a perfectly level area of 130 feet diameter; this was surrounded by a continued earthern mound, eight feet high, having seven turf benches on the inside; the top of the mound or rampart was seven feet in width. A peculiar feature of this Round was a pit in the area, described as 'a circular pit, in diameter thirteen feet, deep three feet, the sides sloping, and halfway down a bench of turf, so formed as to reduce the area of the bottom to an ellipsis': this hollow was connected with the circular benches by a shallow trench, four feet six inches wide, and one foot in depth; the length is not given in the text, but the scale shows it to have been forty feet: where it reaches the side a semicircular breach ten feet in diameter is made in the benches. Borlase suggests that the hollow pit might have generally served for representing Hell, and that in the drama of the Resurrection it might have served for the Grave. The trench he conjectures to have aided in representing the Ascension, but he does not clearly shew how this was done."

Returning to the vehicle of two stages, we find from the inventory of the Cappers' pageant at Coventry, "The Resurrection and Descent in Hell," that the lower portion (wheels, etc.) was concealed by painted cloths or tapestry work; and that Hell-mouth was also of painted canvas stretched upon a framework. From behind the scene which represented, as in a drawing given by Hearne from an ancient calendar,[1] a dragon with wide-open chaps,

[1] See copies in Sharp and Hone.

advanced the white (or "savyd"), and the black (or "dampnyd") souls, as if issuing from the insides of the monster. The charge for making a new Hell-head of this kind in 1542 was 8*s.* 2*d.*, and evidently one or more persons attended it to open or shut the mouth, or to display flames as projecting.

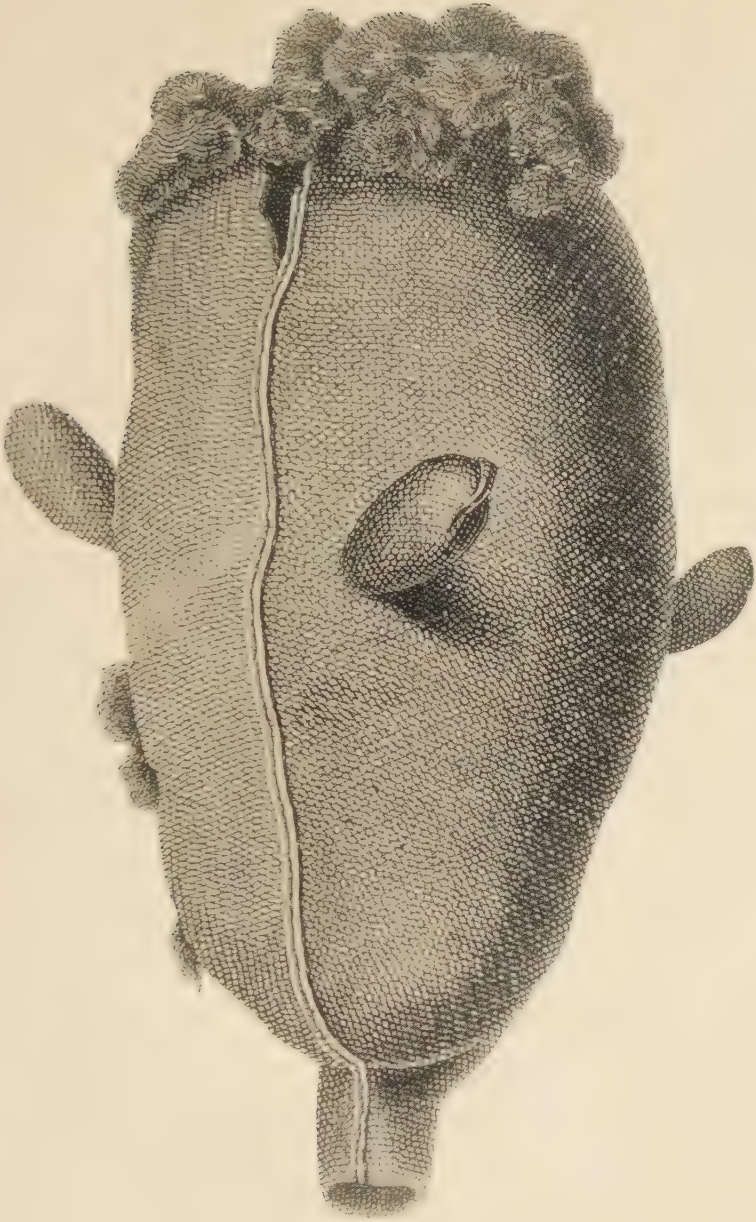
Properties and Expenses

In Sharp's collection of accounts for the craft-plays of Coventry, we find payments for the men, sometimes eight, sometimes twelve, who drew the vehicles from station to station; also for the drinks that they consumed; also for the structures in which these "pageants" were housed between celebrations, and for the repair of the pageants of the various companies.

The Smiths' Company of Coventry makes payments, between 1449 and 1585, in connection with its Pageant of the Trial, Condemnation, and Crucifixion of Christ, in varying sums for such items as the cross with a rope to draw it up and a curtain hanging before it; gilding the pillar and the cross; two pair of gallows; mending of imagery; a standard of red buckram; and other properties of like description. In the matter of dress it pays in different years: for six skins of white leather for God's garment, 18*d.*; for making of the same garment, 10*d.*; for mending a cheverel (peruke) for God, and for sewing of God's coat of leather, and for making of the hands to the same coat, 12*d.*; for a girdle for God, 3*d.*; for a new sudere (*the Veronica*) for God (*i.e.*, Christ), 7*d.* For Herod, as follows: for painting the falchion and Herod's face, 10*d.*; for mending of Herod's head, and a mitre and other things, 2*s.*; for a slop for Herod; for "assadyn" (gold-foil) for Herod's crest and falchion, etc. For Pilate's

wife; for mending of dame Percula's garments, 7*d.*; to reward Mistress Grimsby for lending of her gear for Pilate's wife, 12*d.* The following payments, also, are variously enlightening: For refreshment during the second rehearsal in Whitsun week, 1490: "... Item in brede, Ale and Kechyn ... ij^{s} iiij; item for ix galons of Ale ... xviijd; item for a Rybbe of befe and j gose ... vi^{d}. Payd to the players for corpus xp̃isti daye: Imprimis to God ... ij^{s}; item to Caiaphas iij^{s} iiij^{d}; item to Heroude iij^{s} iiij^{d}; item to Pilatt is wyffe. . . ij^{s}; item to the Bedull. . . iiij^{d}; item to the devyll and to Judas xviij^{d}; item to Pilatte . . . iiij^{s}." From which we learn that the principal character was Pilate; that next to him came Herod and Caiaphas; and that Christ and Judas were held in lighter dramatic esteem.

In what precedes some indication has been made of accoutrements and stage properties. Characters were particularised by dress as much as by utterance. The Pilate of the Coventry Smiths' play always had a green coat and made use of a mall and balls. His mall was a club with a stuffed head (leather and wool, about a foot and a half long) which served partly for a sign of authority but more for beating his companions and the public. The balls were perhaps the insignia of office; but more likely, since they, too, were of leather, they served for interludes of juggling. The margin of the Chester plays is studded with stage directions such as "fluryshe," "cast up," "sworde," when ranting kings like Balaak and Herod are on the boards. The "caste-up" is hardly of anything internal: it may be of the staff (sceptre) or of the balls. Such nonsense seemed requisite to offset the intense and unfamiliar strain of gazing upon royalty even though illusionary. So, when the three kings



Pilate's Club or Mall

From "A Dissertation on the Pageants or Dramatic Mysteries Anciently Performed at Coventry"

leave Herod, we can hear the Chester bumpkins draw in the breath lingeringly; and we read in the margin the solicitude of the author or stage-manager "*The boye and pigge when the kinges are gone.*"

Herod is represented in helmet and painted visor or mask, and an elaborate gown of blue satin. His helmet (or crest) and the falchion, probably borne before him, are tricked with silver, gold, and green foil. In his hand he holds a sceptre. Judas is distinguished by red hair and beard. The devil, like Pilate, has a club; he wears also a mask and is clad in leather, probably black. In Chester he seems to have retained his archangelic feathers, but they are "all ragger and rent." He sometimes enters with *Ho, ho, ho;* and in moments of consternation cries *Oute, harrow.* But few exclamations and still fewer buffooneries are assigned to him by the miracle-writers themselves. Of these the actor is generally the inventor. Mary the Virgin and the "two side Maries" have crowns (flowered), and something spelled "roles," which Sharp would like to translate "pads over which to comb the hair," but — discouraging second thought — the "roles" were painted — and why cover a "role" that had engrossed two whole pence in the painting? For the angels there are wings and albs, and suits of gold skins; for God in Doomsday, a coat of leather and a red "sendal" or throne, and a pair of gloves. But then, nearly everybody had gloves; even the demons could quote gloves to serve their purpose, and coats and hose, and "points," and a great deal of hair. This play of Doomsday, by the way, of the Drapers of Coventry, furnishes an important new item introduced in 1556 of a "yerthequake." It was composed of a barrel with "wordys" (which may mean "wards") and a pillar for

the wordys, which cost 3*s.* 4*d.* This is pretty reasonable for an earthquake, as is 4*d.* for attending it, and 2*d.* for covering it. It was probably local, of merely eighth or tenth rank, and with no lateral movement. How the earthquake was brought about, or why they "painted the pillar," is not quite lucid. But we don't know much more about earthquakes of our own. The Drapers had the advantage of us in that they had "worldes" not simply to quake but burn, — three of them for every year.

A good deal of money is laid out for music: trumpets, organs, regals. Regular payments are also made by all companies for keeping the play-book or "original;" and for "bearing" it at rehearsals and performances, — that is, for prompting. Also for the preparation of new copies. One Robert Croo at Coventry, for instance, was a famous copyist and reviser between 1535 and 1562, as well as something of actor, stage-factor, and theatrical tailor. Geo. Bellin, too, was a copyist of Chester plays; and John Parfre and Miles Bloomfield of the Digby series.

Authorship

About the authors of the plays we know little. After the miracles had reached cyclic proportions and passed under guild control, the playwrights were sometimes clerks in secular orders, sometimes fellows of colleges, sometimes country schoolmasters, sometimes impromptu poets or poet-actors of the city, company, or craft. The name even of the jolly clerk of Wakefield whom I elsewhere call the master-playwright of that cycle has vanished from memory. Concerning the authorship of the Chester plays, dispute still exists; but the evidence for Randall, or Randulf Higden, a monk

of St. Werburgh's, and for the year 1328, has recently gained in weight. The probabilities are that his contribution was largely of adaptation and translation; the latter from Latin sources, and early French mysteries. At Beverley we come across an entry of payment in 1423 to one "Master Thomas Bynham, a friar preacher, for making and composing the banns" (banes, announcements) which were proclaimed before the *Corpus Christi* plays of that year. But he did not write the plays. Lydgate, who lived about the same time in the Benedictine Abbey of Bury in Suffolk, is said to have written miracle plays; but we have no proof. At Lincoln the Chapter of the Cathedral makes provision in 1488 for a certain Robert Clarke because "he is so ingenious in the show and play called the Ascension, given every year on St. Anne's day." And in 1517 Sir Robert Denyar is appointed priest of the Guild of St. Anne "he promising yearly to help in bringing forth and preparing the pagents in the guild."[1] Marriott,[2] quoting Warton, tells us of a payment for a Miracle Play, in 1511, to a brotherhood priest, called John Hobarde, by the churchwardens of Basingstoke. Basingstoke turns out, however, to be Basingbourne, and the miracle play to be the playbook, which Hobarde may merely have kept for them, or loaned to them, or copied for them. We can only hope that he wrote it. In 1521, as Mr. Leach again tells us, a Grammar School Master of Lincoln suggests to the mayor that a foundation be made of a chantry priest in St Michael-on-Hill to be appointed by the mayor and commonalty *after Dighton's death* with a

[1] Leach, in *Furn. Misc.*, pp. 225, 226.

[2] Marriott, *Engl. Mir. Pl.*, XLIX; Warton, *Hist. Engl. Poet.*, III, 327.

proviso that the appointee "shall yearly be ready to help to the preparing and bringing forth the procession of St. Anne's day." This looks as if Dighton were the recognised playwright and stage-manager in 1521. Still later, in the same century, another schoolmaster, Ralph Radcliffe of Hitchin, was writing miracle plays and presenting them in a theatre contrived by himself; but neither his plays, since they were probably in Latin, nor the *Jephtha* of one John Christopherson, in Latin and Greek, can be regarded as within the scope of our discussion. While the polemic Bale was Bishop of Ossory he wheedled some "protestant Irishmen"— more probably young clerks and students of his own importing — into presenting two of his insufferables, *God's Promises* and *John the Baptist*, at Kilkenny, at the Market Cross — on the day of the accession of Queen Mary. The bishop had, wittingly or not, seized his last chance for that kind of thing; but the Irish — the real ones — in the audience did n't think much of the performance. In 1567 another schoolmaster, Thomas Ashton, presented his own version of the *Passion of Christ* in the quarry at Shrewsbury; and in 1584 John Smythe, a Coventry lad who had been a Scholar at St. John's, Oxford, since 1577, wrote a play, *The Destruction of Jerusalem*, for the crafts of Coventry. The latter was to take the place of the scriptural miracles, against which protestant reaction had, by that time, set in. It was based upon Josephus, and was played with great spectacle and repeated as late as 1591. That was the last craft-performance of Coventry and one of the last in England. The William Jordan who wrote the *Creation of the World*, in 1611, was merely a compiler of the older *Origo Mundi*, and can therefore in no sense be regarded as a creator of this kind of drama.

Contemporary Allusions

But though the miracles, like the contemporary ballads, are largely anonymous, they are not unconsidered by writers of contemporary fame. Mention of miracle plays, or allusion to them, is frequent in the literature of Englishmen from that famous poem of William of Waddington written in French of the later thirteenth century, and translated by Robert Mannyng of Brunne in the early fourteenth, down to the dramas of John Heywood and William Stevenson, Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. Waddington denounces especially the participation of clerks masked and disguised, in outdoor representations of sacred subjects. These he calls "miracles"; but he approves of liturgical dramas — the Resurrection or the Nativity played in the divine service in the church, and "pur plus aver devocioun." Denunciation, even more violent, still exists in a sermon, of the later years of the fourteenth century, which recognises no advantage in acted plays of any place or any kind. The Wyclifite author of this homily holds that to take "the most precious workes of God in play and bourde" is blasphemy pure and simple. He applies the name "miracle-playing" to dramas not only of Christ but of his saints; and he shows acquaintance with plays of Christ's passion and resurrection, of Antichrist and of the day of doom. Langland, likewise, makes a friar minor, in *Piers Plowman's Crede*, boast

> We haunten no tavernes, ne hobelen abouten;
> At marketes *and miracles* we meddle us never.

Chaucer, on the other hand, has meddled with miracles more than once to make his characters real and of the

spirit of the age. His "joly Absolon" of the *Miller's Tale* is a typical parish-clerk, who "after the Schole of Oxenford" can trip and dance and "pleyen songes on a small rubible"; — nay more

> Sometyme, to shewe his lightnesse and maistrye,
> *He pleyeth Herodes on a scaffold hye.*

The Wife of Bath makes her

> visitaciouns
> To vigilies and to processiouns,
> To preching eke and to these pilgrimages,
> *To pleyes of miracles* and mariages.

The

> Miller that for-dronken was al pale
> So that unnethe upon his hors he sat

had doubtless learned to rant at *Corpus Christi* play. He it was that would not wait for all the Host would say:

> Ne abyde no man for his curteisye,
> But *in Pilates Vois* he gan to crye,
> And swore by armes and by blood and bones,
> "I can a noble tale for the nones."

And this "noble tale" itself of Nicholas and the Carpenter's wife, what is it but a miracle turning on a prophecy of "Nowelis flood," — a miracle suggested not by Genesis at all, but by the pageant of Chester, York, or Wakefield?

> "Hastow not herd," quoth Nicholas, "also
> The sorwe of Noë with his felawshipe,
> *Ere that he mighte gete his wyf to shipe?*
> Him had he lever, I dar wel undertake,
> At thilke tyme, than alle his wetheres blake,
> That she hadde had a ship herself all one."

One cannot read the Canterbury Tales without suspecting that the familiarity displayed by the simpler character with

scriptural event and legend is supposed to be derived from plays rather than directly from the services of the church.

John Heywood's Pardoner, too, of the *Four PP.*, when he visits hell and is welcomed smilingly by the devil that kept the gate, explains their odd acquaintance in the way most obvious to his auditors —

> He knew me well; and I at laste
> Remembered hym syns longe tyme past:
> For, as good happe wolde have it chaunce,
> Thys devyll and I were of olde acqueyntaunce,
> *For oft in the play of Corpus Cristi*
> *He had played the devyll at Coventry.*

And the "devyll" himself may be supposed to allude to the opening play of the cycle when he congratulates his mortal friend on an opportune arrival, — on this the anniversary of their Founder,

> *For this daye Lucyfer fell*
> Which is our festyvall in hell.

Later testimony of this kind is so common that it need not be quoted.

The Spectators

During the palmy days of these wonderful representations, the audiences, as we have already noticed, were not limited to craftsmen and their families, or clerics, or simple folk from the surrounding countryside. Kings, queens, princes, and nobles attended the plays at Skinners' Well; lords and ladies assisted sometimes with money, sometimes with the loan of pointed hose and silken gowns and other properties. Henry V, Margaret of Anjou, Richard III, Henry VII were present at their several convenience to grace the miracles at Coventry. Chaucer and Lydgate and Langland, and many a less-known man of letters, rubbed elbows with the crowd. The

plays were at once an advertisement of civic solidarity, wealth, wit, and enterprise, an incentive of literary culture and amusement, and a vehicle, longer effective than dubious, for the conveyance of religious instruction. The utmost care was taken to prevent the abuses that attend unwieldy assemblies. None but those who are privileged may bear weapons; disturbances are met with imprisonment and fine; dissolute characters are warned away or violently ejected before the play-week begins; due provision is made for the separate and orderly observance of religious rites and the collection of moneys from the faithful. At first we read of crowds "admiring," then weeping and laughing by turns. It is not until reason has invaded tradition that the simple delight, æsthetic and devotional, fades utterly away. Of course there were, from the beginning, remonstrances and inhibitions on the part of the church. That is an ancient quarrel between church and stage. But in spite of material grossness, ignorance, crudity, and occasional irreverence, the plays were not without their beneficent consequences. A queer story is handed down by Disraeli and Sharp of a puritanical vicar of Rotherham, who once happened to be preaching at a place called Cartmel in Lancashire,[1] toward the end of the seventeenth or the beginning of the eighteenth century. "The churches," says he, "were so thronged at nine in the morning, that I had much ado to get to the pulpit. One day an old man of sixty, sensible enough in other things, and living in the parish of Cartmel, coming to me on some business, I told him that he belonged to my care and charge, and I desired to be informed in his knowledge of religion. I

[1] From the MS. Life of John Shaw, in Disraeli's *Curiosities;* Sharp, p. 53.

asked him how many Gods there were. He said he knew not. I, informing him, asked again how he thought to be saved. He answered he could not tell: yet thought that was a harder question than the other. I told him that the way to salvation was by Jesus Christ, God-man, who as he was man, shed his blood for us on the cross, etc. 'Oh, sir,' said he, 'I think I heard of that man you speak of, once in a play at Kendal, called Corpus Christ's play, where there was a man on a tree, and blood ran down,' etc. And afterwards he professed he could not remember that he ever heard of salvation by Jesus, but in that play." Now, the plays had ceased at Kendal only about the end of the first third of the seventeenth century. As late as the sixteenth, the clergy seem to have been in the way of recommending them as a means of salvation. For, said a preacher (in the *C Mery Talys* of 1526) at the close of a sermon on the Creed: "Yf you beleve not me, then for a more suerte and suffycyente auctoryte go your way to Coventre, and there ye shall se them all playd in Corpus Cristi play."

The Passing of the Miracles

Because of the expense incident to the production of the miracles, the gradual changes in the function and formation of town-guilds, and the revulsion among religious reformers against ritualistic commemoration of the saints, and of the doctrine of the Real Presence which *Corpus Christi* was designed to inculcate, the performance of the sacred cycles begins in the first half of the sixteenth century, here and there, to wane in frequency, magnificence, and interest.

In Lincoln in 1540, several guilds are ordered to restore their pageants which they have for some reason

broken; soon after this officials are scouring the country for collections to support the plays; later the jewels, plates, and ornaments of St. Anne's show (in other towns, of *Corpus Christi*) are sold for the benefit of the Common Chamber. During Queen Mary's reign there is a brief restoration of the plays; but after 1563 "the story of Toby" is substituted, and even of that no record later than 1567 remains.[1] In 1572 and 1575 the ecclesiastical authorities of Canterbury, York, and Chester inhibited the performance of the Chester plays; but the play-loving mayors of those years had their way. Still, though the plays in 1575 had been revised to suit modern religious taste, they were "to the great dislike of many," ostensibly, however, because they were "in one part of the city." In 1599 the mayor, "a godly zealous man . . . would not suffer any playes, bear-baits or bull-bait." The "Banes" were read as late as 1600; but David Rogers, in his Breviary of 1609, thanks God that 1574 (1575?) was the last time "the whitson playes weare played. And we have all cause to power out oure prayeres before God, that neither we nor oure posterities after us, may never see y^e^ like abomination of desolation with such a Clowde of Ignorance to defyle with so highe a hand y^e^ sacred scriptures of God."[2]

In Coventry complaint was made of the expense as early as 1539, but the pageants had such vogue that they were with only occasional intermission continued till 1580. Though some of the pageants were sold in 1586 and 1587, the songs for the Shearmen and Taylors are dated, as for production, 1591, and the Weavers were still able to lend their stage properties in 1607. By

[1] Leach, in *Furn. Misc.*, p. 227.

[2] Harl. *MS.* 1944; printed by Furnivall, *Digby Plays*, xviii, *et seq.*

1628 the pageants had "bine put downe many yeares since."[1] In Newcastle, after 1578, the "ancient" plays of *Corpus Christi* were acted only on special occasions and by special command of the magistrates. In York, from 1535 on, some of the miracles were subject to emendation, others to exclusion. More and more frequently moral plays like the *Creed* and the *Paternoster* are substituted. In 1548 plays of Roman Catholic tradition like the *Assumption of Our Lady* and her *Coronation* are rejected. Objections to the performances increase on ground of sickness or poverty, or of ecclesiastical disapproval of their doctrine. In 1568 the play-book appears to have undergone careful revision to suit Archbishop Grindal and the Dean of York. It looks as if the plays were performed in 1579; but no later notice of the kind remains, though, according to Miss Smith,[2] the Bakers were obtaining rent for their pageant-house in 1626, and electing "pageant-masters" as late as 1656. Shakespeare, Jonson, Massinger, and Fletcher were then long dead. Mazarin had succeeded Richelieu, and Cromwell had but two years more to live. Descartes was gone and Leibnitz come. Otway and Fénelon were three years old, Newton fourteen, and Dryden twenty-five. Milton had spent four years in darkness, and was meditating his *Paradise Lost*. In three years Molière would produce his *Précieuses Ridicules;* in four, Charles II would come back to his own; in ten, Bunyan would replace the miracles with *Grace Abounding for the Chief of Sinners*, and in another decade yet with that child of all the mysteries, the best of modern moralities, the *Pilgrim's Progress*.

[1] Sharp, *Diss. Cov. Myst.*, and Chambers, II, 358.

[2] *York Plays*, xxxvi.

CHAPTER VIII

THE COLLECTIVE STORY OF THE CYCLES

In the miracle plays of our forefathers the mirth, the proverbial philosophy, the social aims, the æsthetic and religious ideals of the middle ages still live for us. At first, as I have shown, these plays existed as units, each commemorating some episode in the life of Christ or of the saints, or some important fragment of Old Testament history. But gradually they coalesced in this town and that into a cycle or sequence (of anywhere from five to fifty dramatic compositions), covering in one vast survey the whole of sacred history and prophecy, as told in scripture and in ecclesiastical legend, from the Fall of the Angels to the Day of Judgment. The cycle of York stands to one of its component pageants as the minster itself to chapel, cloister, nave, or crypt. And the same simple, patient, practical mystics built both cycle and cathedral. If we would know how our fathers lived and dreamed we should study their temples of dramatic verse as well as their aspirations in stone.

The collective story of sacred plays falls readily into five groups. The first is that of the *Creation and of Old Testament History*. It presents in kaleidoscopic spectacle God making the angels and the universe, Lucifer and his hosts aspiring and descending; the creation of Adam and Eve, the temptation and the expulsion from Paradise; the promise of the Oil of

Mercy; the birth of the first children of men; their instruction in worship and industry; then, the blood of Abel crying from the ground, the curse upon Cain, his wanderings, and his death like a hunted thing at the hands of Lamech; Adam in his old age weary of delving, and sick unto death, sending Seth to the angel who keeps Paradise to obtain that Oil of Mercy if he may; Seth's vision of the Tree in the Garden and of the unborn Christ, and his return to Adam with the kernels of the fruit whence should spring the wood of the Cross; Adam's joy, his pious resignation and his death, and the planting of the holy kernels; Enoch's walk with God; the corruption of mankind, and God repenting him of his creation; the mission of Noah, the building of the Ark and the history of the Flood; the meeting of Abraham and Melchisedec; the sacrifice of Isaac; Jacob and his wily mother cheating Esau of his birthright and blessing; the wanderings of Jacob and the vision at Bethel; the Israelites in Egypt, the plagues, and the passage of the Red Sea; Moses and the chosen people in the wilderness, the giving of the laws, and the discovery of the Sacred Rods sprung from the "pippins" of Seth; Balaam on his errand of imprecation,

> "Go forth, Burnell, go forth, go!
> What the Devil, my ass will not go!"—

the Angel in the way, and Balaam's prophecy of the Star to come out of Jacob, the sceptre out of Israel; then, the transplantation of the Holy Rods by David; the royal psalmist's sin with Bathsheba; Solomon building the Temple, and cutting down the Kingly Tree,—the beam that the builders rejected; and of that beam Maximilla prophesying that Christ should hang thereon;

the bridge over Cedron; and finally, the procession of the prophets who foretell the Christ: Balaam and Isaiah, — Jesse, David, and Solomon, and chosen rulers of the disrupted kingdom, — Jeremiah and Jonah and Daniel and Micah, and other righteous, — a glorious pomp preceding the Dawn, and singing in many tones

Virgo concipiet
Et pariet filium, nomen Emanuel;
Egredietur virga de radice Jesse
Et flos de radice ejus ascendet.

As the *Processus Prophetarum* closes the prologue of the cosmic history, so it also opens the divine Mystery of the Atonement. This is itself a unit, but it falls into three dramatic groups, — the Nativity, the Ministry, and the Passion of Christ.

The Nativity casts its nimbus before: with the angelic prophecy of a daughter,

Which shall hight Mary, and Mary shall bear Jesus
Which shall be Savior of all the world and us,

the childless home of Joachim and Anna is glorified. The days pass, and the promised maid is born. "All in white as a child of three," she mounts the steps of the Temple, to be dedicated "to Godde's service" and to chastity. Then follow the choice of a husband for the maiden turned fourteen, the flowering of old Joseph's rod, and the betrothal; the departure of Joseph from his "little bride," and the fair one with her virgins working on the curtain for the temple of the Lord; then, Gabriel on his high embassy, and the *Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum*, the visit to Elizabeth, and the salutation of the Mother of our Lord; then, Joseph's return

and his trouble about Mary, and the trial scene in the Temple where, miraculously, the Virgin is vindicated and her detractors are put to shame; next, royalty and the palace, — Cæsar Augustus taking counsel with Cyrenius against the coming of the Child; the Emperor and the Sibyl, her prophecy of Christ; then, the riches of poverty, — the journey to Bethlehem, the stable, the birth of Christ, and the sign shown to the midwives; Emperor and Sibyl again, Christ's birth announced and the Emperor converted; the shepherds and the star; the Magi and the star, and Herod on his throne; after that the Temple, — the purification of Our Lady, the presentation of the Child and the *Nunc dimittis* of Simeon; then, the offering of the Magi; Herod deceived and furious, the flight of Joseph, Mary, and the Child into Egypt and the massacre of the innocents; again, the palace, and high revel of Herod and his knights, — to them Death entering to strike, and the Devil issuing from Hell to claim his own.

Here ends the group of the Nativity, and the active *Ministry of Christ* begins: the Temple, and Christ with the doctors, disputing; the baptism in the Jordan; the mountain of temptation; the marriage in Cana of Galilee; the transfiguration; the absolution of the adulteress; the healing of the blind in Siloam; the raising of Lazarus from the dead, and the cure of blind Bartimaeus.

Then follows the group of plays of which the focus is the *Passion:* the entry into Jerusalem, and the cleansing of the Temple; Jesus in the house of Simon the leper and Mary Magdalen anointing him "aforehand for his burying"; the conspiracy of the Jews, the treachery of Judas, and the Last Supper; the garden of Gethsemane, — the agony, the betrayal, the flight of the disciples; the

trial before Caiaphas, the buffeting, the denial of Peter; the trial before Pilate, and the dream of Pilate's wife; the trial before Herod; the second accusation before Pilate, the remorse and self-murder of Judas, and the purchase of the Field of Blood; the condemnation and the scourging; the recovery of the cross-wood from the brook Cedron, the forging of the nails for the cross, and the leading of Christ up to Calvary; the ministrations of Simon the Cyrenian and Veronica; the lamentation of Mary and the daughters of Jerusalem; the crucifixion; the casting of lots for the seamless coat; the promise to the penitent thief; and the undying triumph of the Saviour's death. The miracle, then, by which the centurion receives his sight; the descent from the cross, and the burial; the harrowing of hell; the imprisonment of Joseph and Nicodemus, and the setting of the watch; the resurrection, the discomfiture of the Jews, and the release of the prisoners; the angels — to the Maries: "Whom seek ye?" (*Quem quaeritis in sepulchro, Christicolae?*); the appearances of the risen Christ — to the Magdalene, to the pilgrims for Emmaus, to the Eleven; the rebuke to Thomas, the promise of the Holy Ghost, and the ascension.

Here end the passion plays, properly so-called; and the last division begins, — the *History of the Living Church:* the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost; the meeting of Veronica and Tiberius, the conversion of the Emperor, the condemnation and death of Pilate; the ministry of the apostles; the death and burial, the assumption and coronation of the Mother of our Lord; the piety and martyrdom and miracles of the saints — Paul and the Magdalene, Christina and Catharine, and of others a numerous host; the miracles of Our Lady; the

miracles of the Blessed Sacrament; the signs of Judgment; the coming of Antichrist and his destruction. — Doomsday.

From this river of history, ecclesiastical and profane, of apocrypha, apocalypse, and legend, the mediæval playwrights of pageants, single or cyclic, drew the waters of poetic life. The miracles of the saints, indeed (except one or two of the Virgin and those of St. Paul and Mary Magdalene), and the histories of certain Old Testament heroes, such as Daniel and Tobit, are not included in any of the English cycles; but they are in the French. And one and another of them occurs in independent form in the annals of mediæval English drama. I have already mentioned the *St. Katharine* of Geoffrey, and the *Daniel* and *St. Nicholas* of the twelfth century Hilarius. A *Tobit* was acted at Lincoln in 1564 and 1567; the *Deaths of the Apostles* and a play of Sts. Crispin and Crispinianus, in Dublin, in 1528; a St. Meriasek in Cornwall; and plays of numerous others — St. James, St. Andrew, St. Laurence, St. Susanna, St. Lucy, St. Margaret — in various places. It has been recently announced by Mr. Chambers that the "dumb show of St. George," of which the subtle J. P. Collier says that it was presented by Henry the Fifth for the entertainment of Emperor Sigismund of "Almayne" was nothing more than a "soteltie" or ornamented cake; but the probability still remains that many a miracle of the patron saint preceded by centuries the mummings of St. George which obtain in England even at the present day. Plays of St. Paul and Mary Magdalene form part of the Digby cycle of which I have something later to say; and a miracle of the Blessed Sacrament is preserved in the well-known Croxton play, which was composed

between 1461 and 1500. This latter-day episode of the history of Christ's saints represents the desecration by Jews of a wonder-working wafer, their discomfiture and ultimate conversion, and is a striking example of the transition from the sacred and didactic drama to the realistic and comic play of contemporary life.[1]

The five groups of plays into which the collective miracles, above enumerated, may be resolved, are, as we have noticed, but three, in effect: that of pre-christian history and legend, that of Christ's ministry, and that of his church. Of these, the first is the prologue to the swelling theme of the second, the essential drama of the Atonement — God born into the world; living, suffering, dying for man; harrowing hell, rising from the dead, and ascending into heaven; and to that the third is the epilogue.

[1] Since I have dwelt at some length in my Beginnings of English Comedy (*Repr. Engl. Comedies*, xxxvii) on popular saints' plays and "marvels," I must refer the reader to that treatise, suggesting, however, that its material be supplemented by Mr. Chambers' scholarly study of the relation of folk dramas, mummings, etc., to the pagan rites and festivals of our Teutonic and Celtic predecessors.

CHAPTER IX

THE HISTORICAL ORDER OF THE ENGLISH CYCLES

From the analogy of the English dramatic tropes and offices and the sacred plays of Hilarius, an Englishman brought up in France about the middle of the twelfth century, we may conclude that dramas, so long as acted in the church, were largely, if not wholly, in Latin. Gradually an Anglo-Norman line or refrain slipped in, even in case of a church play; and from the end of the fourteenth century on, liturgical plays were performed which, with survivals of the Latin, were principally in English. Extra-ecclesiastical plays, on the other hand, were, at an early period, probably first in the Anglo-Norman, and then in the English. If the traditional date of the Chester plays, 1328, may be credited, we have an indication of the still earlier use of the vernacular in the miracle cycle.

Of extant approaches to a play in English, the earliest is *The Harrowing of Hell*, about 1250, which Dr. Ward well denominates a link between the dramatic dialogue and the religious drama. The next, according to Professor Ten Brink,[1] is the *Jacob and Esau*, preserved as part of the Towneley cycle. Philological tests would indeed indicate for this an early date of composition.

[1] *Hist. Eng. Lit.*, Vol. II, Pt. I, 244; Vol. II, Pt. II, 274.

Ten Brink says about 1280, and he thinks it is an independent creation. I must agree with Mr. Pollard [1] that, in style and language, it is more probably part of an original didactic cycle. The Brome play of *Abraham and Isaac*, which comes next in order of production, is undoubtedly the basis of *The Sacrifice of Isaac* in the Chester cycle, and probably in an earlier version dates from the beginning of the fourteenth century. The *Ludus Filiorum Israel*, which was performed at Cambridge, perhaps by the guild of *Corpus Christi*, in 1350, is not extant; but we may conjecture that it was akin to the play of the poltroon knight given by the English bishops at the Council of Constance, 1415, and embodied in the various cycles — best represented, however, by Parfre's *Kyllynge of the Children of Israell* in the Digby manuscript. These plays are all on subjects employed by the cycles. The *Harrowing* may be said to have contributed to drama an element of wonder; the two plays next mentioned contributed respectively elements of realism and pathos; the *Ludus Filiorum* in all likelihood some quality of farce or burlesque.

The Cornish

Of the cycles composed in England the Cornish [2] may have been in its original form prior to the rest. It consists of four plays. The *Beginning of the World* (*Origo Mundi*) extends from the creation to the death of Maximilla in Solomon's time for prophesying of the Christ. *The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (*Passio Domini*) covers the life of Christ from the temptation to the crucifixion. *The Death of Pilate* presents the legendary

[1] *Towneley Plays*, p. xxv.

[2] E. Norris, *Cornish Drama*, 2 vols., 1859.

The Sacrifice of Isaac

account of the leprosy of the Emperor, Tiberius: how Tiberius sent for healing to the wonder-working Jesus and learned through Veronica that Pilate had already suffered that Physician to be put to death; how he is assured by her that he may yet be healed of his disease if he kiss the handkerchief upon which the likeness of Christ's face has been imprinted; how the Emperor is healed and, at the instigation of Veronica, sends for Pilate to take retribution upon him for the death of Christ; how Pilate comes wearing the seamless garment of our Saviour, and how that melts the wrath of Tiberius into love; how, at Veronica's word, the cloth of Jesus is stripped from Pilate, and how, condemned, he betakes himself to suicide; how, finally, land and water alike refuse to hold his accursed carcass. This *Death of Pilate* appears as an insertion in the middle of *The Resurrection and Ascension*, which is itself the concluding play of the cycle. The manuscript is in Cornish and, according to the editor, could not have been made earlier than 1400. From an examination of the references to localities and the formation of the names, it appears that the *Origo Mundi* may have been composed as early as 1300; and the *Resurrection* during the second half of the fourteenth century.[1] The latter date would be indicated for the *Passion of our Lord*, also, by the use in its opening scene of a verse-form closely approximating to the unique nine-line stanza of the master-playwright of Wakefield.

Of the first of these miracles, the *Origo Mundi*, a second version is preserved in William Jordan's *Creation of the World*, written 1611. Its only claim to consideration is that it alone of British cycles dramatises the wanderings of Cain and the life of Enoch, and is the only associate of

[1] E. H. Pedler, Appendix to Norris, *Cornish Drama*.

the Coventry N-Town in presenting the subject of Cain's death. In other respects Jordan's play is but a revision, sometimes adopting or imitating, sometimes reproducing the *Origo Mundi*. It is not at all unlikely that the original cycle was written in the ecclesiastical college of Glazeney, founded about 1287; and probably by some member of the religious body who himself was a native of Penryn.

The Great Cycles: Manuscripts and Dates of Composition

The manuscript of the York plays appears to have been made 1430-40; that of the Wakefield (or so-called Towneley, from the family which preserved it), after the middle of the same century. Most of the manuscript of the so-called *Ludus Coventriæ* was written in the year 1468. The manuscripts of the Chester cycle were made between 1591 and 1607, and appear to be based on a text of the beginning of the fifteenth or the end of the fourteenth century. In spite of all that has been written, no agreement has yet been reached concerning the comparative age of the four great cycles. The modernity of the Chester manuscripts discourages dialectal investigation, but examination of the language of other cycles should be of assistance. The metrical tests have been only partly applied, as by Davidson and Hohlfeld. I know of no richer field for comparative study of sources, contents, vocabulary, verse, and style than that which here remains to be explored.

According to the tradition preserved in the prose proclamation of the cycle for 1543, and copied in Bellin's manuscript of the cycle, 1600, the Chester plays were "devised and made by one Sir Henry Francis" during the mayoralty of John Arneway; that would be between

1268 and 1277. Francis also went, says the proclamation, three times to Pope Clement to obtain license for the witnessing of the plays. According to other Banns, written in verse for a performance sometime between 1551 and 1572, they were "devised by one Done Rondall, monk of Chester Abbey," in the mayoralty of the same "Sir John Arnway." It is, however, the fashion nowadays to assign them to a much later date. Dr. Ward, for instance, hesitates to place them earlier than the beginning of the fifteenth or the end of the fourteenth century. The fact that French stanzas occur in five places points either to the use of an original written in French, or to composition in a period before the French had ceased to be the language considered appropriate, in England, for kings and courtiers. If the latter hypothesis holds, Dr. Ward is of opinion that the passages in French must have been written before the reign of Richard II. If, on the other hand, the plays are based upon a French original, it has been shown by Professor Hohlfeld to be not at all likely that they should be produced after other mediæval English cycles had developed themselves independently of foreign models.[1] In either case I am persuaded that these passages, and in general the plays containing them, were written at as early a period as the older plays of the York cycle. Pollard[2] dates the composition of the Chester plays

[1] The plays which undoubtedly show French affinities are VI, VIII, XI, XVI, XVII, XIX; but as Hohlfeld (*Die altenglischen Kollektivmisterien*, Anglia, Vol. XI) has pointed out, the parts of VIII, XI, XIX written in the Chaucerian stanza are probably additions by the writer of the Prologue of 1600. Professor Davidson's suggestion (*English Mystery Plays*, p. 130) of an Anglo-Norman origin does not alter the presumption of antiquity.

[2] *Engl. Miracle Plays*, XXXVI.

1340-50. So, also, Ten Brink. The liturgical quality of certain parts and the undramatic and almost epical quality of others, the general prevalence of the didactic, the concatenation in the same play of scriptural or legendary action sufficient for several pageants, the crudity of technique, are a few of the numerous considerations that may be adduced to support as early a date for part of the cycle.

I am, indeed, of the opinion that there is, in spite of apparent anachronism and evident contradiction, a *soupçon* of truth in one or other of the traditions concerning the still earlier origin of the cycle. A manuscript of the cycle prepared by James Miller in 1607 [1] has a note on a fly-leaf dated 1628, which attempts to reconcile both of the earlier accounts. It attributes the authorship of the plays to "Randle Heggenet, a monke of Chester Abbey," who also secured license from Rome to have them played in the English tongue. The source of this account is the same as that of the Banns in verse prefixed by George Bellin to his manuscript of the plays, of 1600,[2] and that of the *Breavarye of Chester*[3] prepared somewhere before 1595 by Archdeacon Rogers and written out by his son in 1609. Both the verse-Banns and the Archdeacon's *Breviary* fix Higgenet's authorship during the mayoralty of Sir John Arneway; and the *Breviary* assigns that period to 1328-9. Unfortunately that date, while it might correspond with Higgenet, whether or not he be the celebrated Ralph Higden, a monk in Chester Abbey from

[1] Br. Mus. Harl. MS. 2124. For a scholarly discussion of the MSS. of the Ch. Plays, see Dr. Deimling's introduction to his E. E. T. S. edition.

[2] Harl. MS. 2013.

[3] Harl. MS. 1944 in Furnivall's *Digby Plays*, XVIII.

1299 to 1364, cannot suit Arneway's term of office, which ended in 1277. In the second place this MS. of 1607 proceeds to assign to Sir Henry Francis, "sometime a monk of the monastery of Chester," the credit of having obtained from "Pope Clemens a thousand daies of pardon, etc., . . . for those who resorted peaceably to see the playes." This attempt to reconcile the claims of Francis with those of Higgenet is inspired by a statement in that prose proclamation of 1543 with which this consideration began. The date of composition is there fixed by the papal reign of a Clement and the mayoralty of Arneway. Since Clement IV was Pope from 1265 to 1276, and Arneway mayor from 1268 to 1277, the account has so far the merit of consistency.[1] But no Randall Higgenet was monk of Chester Abbey between those dates. And the chance, also, of connecting Francis with the plays falls away; for since he was still living in 1382 — senior monk of St. Werburgh's Abbey — he was a trifle too young to have been making plays or pilgrimages in 1276. If, however, the plays were not originally devised as early as 1268-76, it is still not improbable that they were in existence in 1328-29, the date assigned by Rogers. And this supposition is confirmed by a coincidence recently discovered and announced by Mr. Leach and Mr. Chambers, that the mayor of Chester in 1327-29, was a man of name similar to Arneway, *viz.* Ernes (Erneis, Herneys). That

[1] Mr. Leach (*Furnivall Misc.*, p. 232) objects to the authenticity of the proclamation of 1533, as reported in Bellin's MS., that it speaks of the monastery of Chester as "since dissolved," whereas that monastery was not dissolved till 1540. But the 1533 is due to a scribal mistake in copying the document, by which it reads 24 Hen. VIII, by a slip for 34. Chambers, *Mediæval Stage*, II, 348, shows that 1543-4 is the date.

being so, it is not unlikely that the less known mayor Richard Herneys came to be confused with his celebrated predecessor, Erneway, or Hernwey. Herneys' date would correspond with the prime of Randulf Higden, who wrote the great encyclopædia, *Polychronicon*, about 1327, and was monk of Chester Abbey from 1299 to 1364. The authorship of Francis in 1328 is less likely. He would have been only a youth. If there is any truth in the rest of the tradition, the Pope who granted pardon to those resorting to see the plays must have been Clement IV, 1265-76, or Clement V, 1305-16, or Clement VI, 1342-52. Either Francis or Higden might have made the journeys to Rome after 1328, finally obtaining the approval of Pope Clement VI, between 1342 and 1352. Taking all indications into account, there is, therefore, good reason to believe that at the latest some of the Chester plays were in existence during the first third of the fourteenth century, and that the present form of the cycle, with its marks of occasional dependence upon other cycles,[1] represents, in

[1] *The Play of the Shepherds*, Chester VII, resembles Wakefield's *Prima Pastorum* XII; *Christ in the Temple*, Chester XI, may be from York XX (not by way of W., as Hohlfeld, p. 264, thinks). The speech of Jesus in *Resur*, Chester XIX, is akin to W. XXVI, XXXVIII, etc. In my opinion, however, it does not derive from that, but from an earlier version of the missing portion in York XXXVIII or from a common original in the primitive *ab ab ab ab* stanza which is the stanza of York VIII and the body of the oldest York verse-forms. Personal examination convinces me that the Chester play on *The Sacrifice of Isaac* is borrowed almost literally from the *Brome Play* on the same subject; not from any independent English or French, the original of both. Hohlfeld, who is of the same opinion, conjectures an earlier version of the *Brome Play*, beginning of the fourteenth century, as the basis of Chester.

general, a revision which may have been made about the end of the fourteenth or the beginning of the fifteenth century.

The York cycle,[1] according to its scholarly editor, Miss Lucy Toulmin Smith, was composed between 1340 and 1350. Both Miss Smith and Dr. Ward attribute the bulk of the authorship to one hand. A study of the materials, metres (no less than twenty-five, and of different quality, historical and technical), sources, and dramatic style, convinces me that the formative stage of the cycle is of a date as early as the first Chester plays, and that the middle stage of about 1340 to 1360, and the later to about 1400, had each its distinctive poet. But particulars may be deferred to a later chapter.

The Wakefield (Towneley) plays, says Mr. Pollard in his introduction to the latest edition,[2] are built in at least three distinct stages, covering a period of which the limits were perhaps 1360 and 1410. The portions belonging to the earliest stage (part or whole of ten plays),[3] written in the metrical romance stanza ridiculed by Chaucer in the *Rime of Sir Thopas*, would appear to him to have been written as early as 1360. Their primitive character and the fact that they are independent of the corresponding portions of the York cycle, in the middle stage, may indeed indicate a period of composition as early as 1340-50. The original didactic cycle, as Mr. Pollard calls it, was supplemented in the succeeding period by influence from York. During this, the second stage,

[1] *York Mystery Plays*, Oxford, 1885.

[2] By Geo. England, E. E. T. S., Extra Series LXXI.

[3] I, IV, V, VII, IX, XI, and parts of X, XVII, XXIII, XXVIII.

the playwrights of Wakefield borrowed from the York cycle five plays, and adapted three.[1]

In the third stage the hand of a genius is evident. That his contributions were only slightly later than those of the second stage would appear, not only from internal evidence (metrical and linguistic), but from a variety of historical considerations. To the allusions concerning dress cited by the Surtees editor, which would indicate a date between 1390 and 1420, Mr. Pollard adds confirmatory material. He thinks, however, and with reason, that "in a writer so full of allusions, the absence of any reference to fighting tends to show that the plays were not written during the war with France, and thus everything seems to point to the reign of Henry IV as the most likely date of their composition. The date of our text is probably about half a century later. But the example of the York plays shows us that in its own habitat the text of the play could be preserved in tolerable purity for a longer period than this. In the direction of popular treatment it was impossible for any editor, however much disposed towards tinkering, to think that he could improve on the playwright of the nine-line stanza (in which are written the best portions of the Wakefield cycle), while it is reasonable to suppose that the hold of these plays on the Yorkshire audience was sufficiently strong to resist the intrusion of didactics." To these considerations I would add that the Herod's ironical and easy disposal of the Papal Chair in Wakefield XVI is eminently appropriate to the period of *Præmunire*, 1392, and that the shepherd's complaint of "gentlerymen" in

[1] Borrowed — VIII, XVIII, XXV, XXVI, XXX. Adapted — X, XIV, XV. Still others, like IV, XIX, XXVII, would seem to be based upon early alternatives of Y. plays, discarded about 1340.

the *Secunda* fits very well the decade on either side of Wat Tyler's rebellion.

Objections to the attribution of this cycle to Wakefield I cannot stay to consider.[1] The only definite evidences, the appearance of "Wakefield" and "Berkers" at the head of the first pageant, "Wakefield" at the head of the third, and the references to crafts as playing, are for Wakefield. There is no authority for Woodkirk or Widkirk, or Nostel or Whalley. The topographical allusions are suitable to Wakefield; and that Wakefield players sometimes assisted in the York plays, to which the Towneley MS. is deeply indebted, is well known.

Since the guilds of Coventry had their own miracle plays, two of which, the Shearmen and Taylors' Pageant from the *Annunciation* to the *Flight into Egypt*, and the Weavers' Pageant of the *Presentation in the Temple*, are still extant, — and since we have numerous municipal and guild records of the co-operation of these and other crafts in the production of the Coventry plays of *Corpus Christi*, all the way from 1392 to 1591, — the temptation is strong to assign the distinct cycle, edited by Halliwell for the Shakespeare Society in 1841, under the name of *Ludus Coventriæ* to some entirely different origin. For not only was Coventry already supplied with a collective series of its own, the dialectal and scribal peculiarities of the series called *Ludus Coventriæ* are pronounced by philologists to be not those of Warwick-

[1] See Skeat, *The Locality of the Towneley Plays* (*Athenæum*, 3449, Dec. 2, 1893); Pollard, *Introduction to the Towneley Plays*, 1897; M. H. Peacock, *The Wakefield Mysteries* (*Anglia* XXIV, 509); Bunzen, *Zur Kritik d. Wakefield Mysterien* (*Diss.*), Kiel, 1903.

shire at all. Professor Ten Brink, indeed, assigns them to the counties northeast of the Midlands, and Mr. Pollard adds good reasons for that conclusion. If, by any chance, they were originally a craft-cycle, they might better be regarded as the lost play-book of some such town as Lincoln. For, in the Lincoln craft-plays there was always ecclesiastical co-operation, and especial emphasis was laid upon the romance of the Virgin: characteristics which mark the so-called *Ludus Coventriæ*.

The subsequent performance of the series one is tempted to assign to strolling players, because in the only extant manuscript, that of 1468, the performance is announced not by the customary municipal Banns, but by verses placed in the mouths of three *vexillatores*, banner-bearers, or what we might call sandwich-men, apparently advertising their wares. The stanza assigned to the last of these closes:

> A Sunday next, yf that we may,
> At vi of the belle we ginne our play,
> In N —— Towne, wherefore we pray
> That God now be youre spede. *Amen.*

This would suggest that the plays were given from town to town, the N——, or *Nomen*, of the town being filled in with the designation suitable to the occasion.

These suppositions are reconcilable, if we assume that after the play-book ceased to be used by such a town as Croxton, Lincoln, or Norwich, it passed into the hands of professional actors sufficiently skilful to revise and supplement the text, from time to time, according to need.

But we must reckon with the fact that when the manuscript already inscribed "The plaie called Corpus Christi," passed into the possession of Sir Robert Cotton, about 1630, his librarian, Dr. Richard James, made this

note in Latin on the flyleaf: "Materials of the New Testament in dramatic form as they used to be acted formerly by monks or mendicant friars: this book is commonly called *Ludus Coventriæ* (the Coventry Play) or Play of Corpus Christi; it is written in English metres." Also that Dugdale, the historian of Warwickshire, writing in 1656, said that the plays of this very manuscript were acted, before the suppression of the monasteries, by the Franciscans, or Grey Friars of Coventry; and that he himself had been "told by some old people who in their younger years were eye-witnesses of these Pageants so acted, that the yearly confluence of people to see that shew was extraordinarily great, and yielded no small advantage to the City." The Coventry *Annals*, also, contain an entry of the year 1492–3, which records that "this year the King came to se the playes acted by the Gray Friers, and much commended them." Such items look like fairly conclusive evidence in favour not only of Coventry as the locality, but of the Franciscans as the actors of the disputed cycle. Not, however, if we note the following particulars: (1) Dr. James does not say that the book is correctly called the *Ludus Coventriæ*. He is careful to say it is "commonly" or "traditionally" so-called — *vulgo*; and he adds the general, self-evident title under which the book had reached his hand, *Ludus Corporis Christi*. (2) If his information regarding the history is to be gauged by his accuracy in other respects, it is not worth much, for he tells us that the contents are of the *New* Testament. That statement would apply to such plays of Coventry as we know to have been given by the crafts; but the manuscript under the Doctor's hand was of Old as well as of New Testament subjects. (3) The people who told Dugdale,

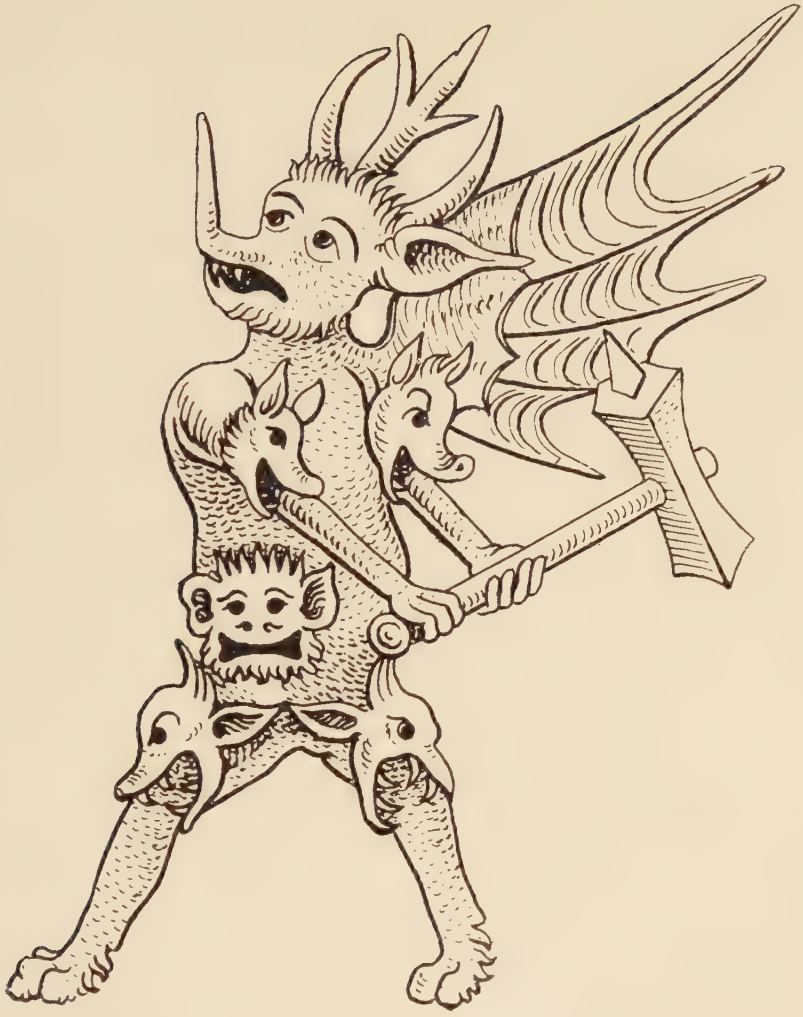
somewhere between 1620 and 1650, that they had seen these plays, were speaking of the craft plays, not of plays given by monks in Coventry. For the Grey Friars of Coventry had, by 1620, been dissolved eighty-two years; whereas the craft plays had been continued to be acted till within twenty-five years of Dugdale's birth in 1605. (4) The source of Dugdale's information about the Grey Friars, namely the *Annals*, is untrustworthy, for they were not written up until the beginning of the seventeenth century. (5) The words "by the Gray Friers" may, after all, mean only that the pageant which so pleased King Henry VII was set up *near* the house of the Franciscans.[1]

There is no other reference in the records — whether Annals, Leet-Book, or Accounts of the Companies — to the participation of Friars of any colour in the dramatic history of Coventry. So far as nomadic performances go, they are more likely to have been undertaken by professional actors.

Wherever the cycle originated, — and probably not at Coventry, — its ecclesiastical flavour, as Dr. Ward has said, indicates the influence of ecclesiastical minds. Such influence was more likely to have been exerted during the period of original composition and by the secular clergy of the town, than in the days of nomadic representation. Professor Hohlfeld,[2] indeed, shows that in certain of the plays the so-called *Ludus Coventriæ*, or, as I would call it, N-Town collection, bears a closer relation than any other cycle to the liturgical drama. While, then, its composition may, in general, be assigned to the first half of the fifteenth century, some parts of the cycle

[1] See Chambers, II, 420; Sharp's *Dissertation*, p. 218.

[2] *Die altenglischen Kollektivmisterien*, Anglia XI.



Devil with Hammer, from a Fresco at Stratford-upon-Avon

From "A Dissertation on the Pageants or Dramatic Mysteries Anciently Performed at Coventry"

appear to be of much earlier date. Hohlfeld says that, like the York plays, this cycle shows no signs of borrowing from other cycles. That, however, is more than doubtful. The manuscript being comparatively modern, the cycle displays frequent elaborations of a more recent date than any in the York and the Wakefield. I have detected resemblances to the Chester and, in occasional phrases and lines, to the York, which can hardly be explained otherwise than as derivative. The portions of the Chester and N-Town cycles which are derived from the Old Testament are, in general, of prior date to the rest of those cycles and to the York and Wakefield. But the rest of the N-Town should be assigned to a date later than that of the other cycles.

The Digby and Other Plays

Of another collection called the Digby,[1] after the Bodleian manuscript in which it is contained, not much of historical value is known. These plays, the *Conversion of St. Paul*, the *St. Mary Magdalen*, the *Massacre of the Innocents*, and the *Morality of the Wisdom that is Christ*, date from the latter half of the fifteenth century and were acted, probably, in several little towns of the Midland counties. Accidentally included in a common manuscript of the early sixteenth century they are, with the exception of the *Massacre*, not components of any cycle. That play, however, as we know from its prologue, is one of a series covering the Nativity, the Magi, Herod and the Innocents, the Flight into Egypt, the Death of Herod, the Purification of Mary, and the Disputation with the Doctors, of which the representation ran through several years and was set for St. Anne's

[1] Digby *Mysteries*, edited by Furnivall (*New Shakesp. Soc.* VII, I).

Day. Of the Digby plays and certain fragmentary cycles like that of Newcastle (about 1426), further mention will be made when we come to consider their dramatic quality. Of the Newcastle there is preserved only the Shipwrights' Play of *Noah's Ark*. The manuscript, now lost, was of about 1426.[1]

Of the Beverley *Corpus Christi*, though it has not survived, numerous details are preserved, and have been published by Mr. A. F. Leach.[2] There were, in 1390, thirty-eight pageants; in 1520, thirty-six; and they were still in presentation during the first half of the sixteenth century. They covered much the same field as those of York, though not so minutely; they added, however, like the Cornish cycle, the play of Adam and Seth. In the municipal records of Lincoln, too, frequent mention is made of miracle-plays from the year 1244 on; the names of seven of the most essential survive, and the regulations by which each of the crafts was bound to provide its pageant. These are denominated, as in other towns, *Corpus Christi* plays, and they seem to have constituted a cycle. Mr. Leach has shown, however, that they were probably played on St. Anne's Day (July 26), and we note that their special feature, as of the N-Town plays, was the adoration of the Virgin. In London a cosmic cycle, now entirely lost but probably the largest and most elaborate of all, was acted at Skinners' Well. In 1378 and 1391 it is called the History of the Old Testament. In the latter year it lasted four days; also in 1409, when it is recorded to have continued the

[1] Printed in 1736 by Bourne in his *History of Newcastle*. Reprinted by Sharp, *Dissertation on Coventry Mysteries*; Brotanek, *Anglia* XXI, 165.

[2] Beverley *Town Documents*, and in *Furnivall Misc.*

drama to the day of Judgment. In 1411 it lasted a whole week, and was attended by the "moste parte of the lordes and gentylles of Ynglond." In Norwich, also, there was a cycle, in 1527, dating probably from 1478 or earlier, and representing scriptural events between the Creation and Pentecost. It consisted of but twelve plays; but it has the distinction of being the one English cycle to dramatise the conflict of David and Goliath. There survives only the Grocers' Pageant of *The Creation of Eve with the expelling of Adam and Eve out of Paradise.*[1]

The Dublin plays can hardly be called a cycle; they represented, to be sure, the stories of Adam and Eve, of Joseph and Mary, of the passion, and of the deaths of the apostles; but they included, with a somewhat ludicrous catholicity of æsthetic appeal, the story of Crispin and Crispinianus, the adventures of Bacchus and of Vulcan, and the Comedy of Ceres, — presented, appropriately enough, by the shoemakers, the vintners, the smiths and the bakers, respectively. The same happy disregard of convention is displayed in the sequence of floats listed for the *Corpus Christi* procession of 1498, where it is arranged that Moses and the Israelites shall accompany Mary and the Child, and Joseph leading the camel, down to Egypt; where Arthur and his knights are interposed between the pageant of Annas and Caiaphas and that of the twelve apostles; while the Nine Worthies, and St. George and the dragon, bring up the rear.

Comparative Scope

Of the comparative scope of the principal cycles a few words may here be said. In the York there are forty-eight plays; in the N-Town, forty-two; in the

[1] In Manly's *Specimens of the Pre-Shakespearean Drama*, 1897, I, 1.

Wakefield, thirty; and in the Chester, twenty-five. The tetralogy of Cornwall is not subdivided into minor pageants. These collections coincide in dramatising, in some manner, the fall of Lucifer, the creation and fall of man, the murder of Abel, the flood, and the sacrifice of Isaac; and in emphasising the series of events beginning with Christ's entry into Jerusalem and ending with the Ascension.

The Cornish develops with especial, one might say with unique, fondness, the legendary history of the cross-wood. It alone of the collections extant dramatises Seth's mission to Paradise, the death of Adam, the life of Enoch, Moses and the holy rods, David's discovery of the rods, the planting of the King's tree and the building of the temple, the martyrdom of Maximilla and the institution of the bridge over Cedron, the bringing of the cross from Cedron, and the refusal of the smith to make the nails for it. The cycle is unique also in the presentation of the imprisonment of Joseph and Nicodemus, the death of Pilate, and the cure and conversion of Tiberius by Veronica. And the story of David's love for Bathsheba finds a dramatic development unattempted by any of the cycles written in English. While the Cornish tetralogy abounds in realistic allusions to villages and manors in the gift of the diocese, to which we find elsewhere no parallel, and in a certain rude ribaldry applicable to the persons acting, it indulges but sparingly in the humorous treatment of biblical characters and episodes. The stories, for instance, of Cain and Abel, and of the flood, which in other cycles afford material for divers twists of comic ingenuity, are presented with no suggestion of aught but their traditional and serious import. The tetralogy omits

altogether the pivotal play of the prophets, the miracles investing the nativity and the youth of Christ, and the romance of the Virgin. Of history succeeding the Ascension it has nothing; and of the life of Christ before the entry into Jerusalem, only the temptation in the wilderness.

The English cycles, on the other hand, though they differ in their respective selection of incidents, omit none of the main divisions of sacred history. The N-Town plays, like the Cornish, are characterised by a predilection for the legendary; but they choose for peculiar elaboration the apocryphal events of the new dispensation, — the miraculous youth, motherhood, passion, and glorification of the Blessed Virgin. The Chester cycle, like the N-Town, condenses the Old Testament history into one-fifth of the whole; like the Cornish, it omits the procession of the prophets, but it substitutes the prophecy of Balaam; and it retains more of his story and of the life of Adam, and of the signs of Judgment and the legend of Antichrist, than either the N-Town or its congeners of Wakefield and York. These two, York and Wakefield, follow the scriptural narrative more closely, and with more discriminating selection than the rest: the former treating particularly of the ministry of Christ and adding the marvels after Pentecost; the latter supplying with realistic detail, original and sometimes grewsome characterisation, and superabundant humour, what it discards of the material of tradition.

CHAPTER X

THE DRAMATIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENGLISH CYCLES

The Early Infusion of the Comic

When, after the reinstitution of the festival of *Corpus Christi* in 1311, the miracle plays began in England to be a function of the guilds, their secularisation, even though the clerks still participated in the acting, was but a question of time; and the injection of crude comedy was a natural response to the civic demand. Indeed, if we consider comedy in its higher meaning as the play of the individual achieving his ends, not by revolt, but by adjustment to circumstance and convention, the miracle play, as I have elsewhere said,[1] was in its essence a preparation for comedy rather than tragedy. For the theme of these dramas is, in a word, Christian: the career of the individual as an integral part of the social organism, of the religious whole. So, also, their aim: the welfare of the social individual. They do not exist for the purpose of portraying immoderate self-assertion and the vengeance that rides after, but the beauty of holiness or the comfort of contrition. Herod, Judas, and Antichrist are foils, not heroes. The hero of the miracle seals his salvation by accepting the spiritual ideal of the community. These plays, accordingly, contribute in a positive manner to the maintenance of the social or-

[1] *Representative English Comedies*, p. xxi.

ganism. The tragedies of life and literature, on the other hand, proceed from secular histories, histories of personages liable to disaster because of excessive peculiarity, — of person or position. Tragedy is the drama of Cain, of the individual in opposition to the social, political, divine; its occasion is an upheaval of the social organism. The dramatic tone of the miracle cycle is, therefore, determined by the conservative character of Christianity in general; the nature of the several plays is, however, modified by the relation of each to one or other of the supreme crises in the biblical history of God's ways toward man. The Massacre of the Innocents emphasises not the weeping of a Rachel, but the joyous escape of the Virgin and the Child. In all such stories the horrible is kept in the background or used by way of suspense before the happy outcome, or frequently as material for mirth. The murder of Abel gradually passes into a comedy of the grotesque. Upon the sweet and joyous character of the pageants of Joseph and Mary and the Child we shall in due course dwell. They are of the very essence of comedy. Indeed, it must be said that in the old cycles the plays surrounding even the Crucifixion are not tragedy; they are specimens of the serious drama, of tragedy averted. The drama of the cross is a triumph. In no cycle does the *consummatum est* close the pageant of the Crucifixion; the actors announce, and the spectators believe, that this is "Goddis Sone," whom within three days they shall again behold, though he has been "nayled on a tree unworthilye to die."

But though the dramatic edifice constructed by our mediæval forbears is generally comedy, it is also divine. And not for a moment did these builders lose their reverence for the House Spiritual that was sacred, nor

once forget that the stones which they ignorantly and often mirthfully swung into strange juxtaposition were themselves hewn by Other Hands. The comic scenes of the English Miracle should, therefore, be regarded not as interruptions to the sacred drama, nor as independent episodes, but as counterpoint or dramatic relief. Regarding the plays as units, we may discover in one, like the beautiful Brome play of *Abraham and Isaac*, or its allied pageants of Chester, York, and Wakefield, a preponderance of the pathetic; in another, like the York or the Wakefield *Scourging of Christ*, a preponderance of the horrible; in the Joseph and Mary plays of the *Ludus Coventriæ* a preponderance of the romantic, and so on. But when we regard them as interdependent scenes of the cycles to which they might, or do, belong, the varied emotional colours blend: indigo, gamboge, vermilion producing an effect, gorgeous — sometimes disquieting, but always definite. Not only definite, but homogeneous and reposeful, when, in moments of historic vision, the tints grow misty, subliminal, and all is moss-green, lavender, or grey, — as when with self-obliteration one contemplates the stained glass window of a mediæval church, King's College Chapel, St. Mark's of Venice, or Nôtre Dame.

The best comedies of the cycles — the York and Wakefield pageants of the *Flood*, the N-Town *Trial of Joseph and Mary* — pass from jest to earnest as imperceptibly as autumn through an Indian summer. In the Second Shepherds' Play, one cannot but remark the propriety of the charm, as well as the dramatic effect, with which the foreground of the sheep-stealing fades into the radiant picture of the Nativity. The pastoral atmosphere is already shot with a prophetic gleam; the

fulfilment is, therefore, no shock or contrast, but a transfiguration — an epiphany. It is, moreover, to be remembered that such characters and episodes as are comically treated are of secular derivation, or, if scriptural, of no sacred significance. Thus the comic and the realistic in the poet were set free; and it is just when he is embroidering the material of mystery with the stammel-red or russet of his homespun that he is of most interest to us. When the plays have passed into the hands of the guilds, the playwright puts himself most readily into sympathy with the literary consciousness as well as the untutored æsthetic taste of the public if he colours the spectacle, old or new, with what is pre-eminently popular and distinctively national. In the minster and out of it, all through the Christian year, the townsfolk of York or Chester had as much of ritual, scriptural narrative, and tragic mystery as they desired, and probably more. When the pageants were acted, they listened with simple credulity, no doubt, to the sacred history, and with a reverence that our age of illumination can neither emulate nor understand; but we may be sure that they awaited with keenest expectation those invented episodes where tradition conformed itself to familiar life — the impromptu sallies, the cloth-yard shafts of civic and domestic satire sped by well-known wags of town or guild. Of the appropriateness of these insertions the spectators made no question, and the dramatists themselves do not seem to have thought it necessary to apologise for their æsthetic creed or practice.

It is as a propædeutic to comedy, then, rather than tragedy that I prefer to treat the miracle plays. And I find it easier to trace some order of dramatic development by approaching them from this point of view.

I have elsewhere attempted to show [1] that the later dramatists did not invent their art; they worked with what they found, and they found a dramatic medium of expression to which centuries and countless influences had contributed. An extended study of the history of English drama should therefore determine, so far as possible, the relative priority, not only of cycles, but of dramatic stages within the cycles; what each has contributed to the enfranchisement of the artistic spirit and the development of the technical factors of the art, — to what extent each has expressed or modified the realistic, satirical, pathetic, romantic, or humorous view of life, and in what ways each has reflected the temper of its time, the manners and the mind of the people that wrote, acted, and witnessed these early dramas. If I arrange the plays that bear upon the development of popular drama according to my conclusions regarding priority of composition, the order, broadly stated for our present rapid survey, would seem to be: First, the Cornish and the Old Testament portions of the Chester and N-Town, then the productions of the second and third periods of the York, and closely following these the crowning efforts of the Wakefield or Towneley, then the New Testament plays of the Chester and N-Town, and finally the surviving portions of the collections of Digby and Newcastle. This order, which is roughly historical, has the advantage, as I perceive after testing it, of presenting a not unnatural sequence of the æsthetic values or interests essential to a kind of drama which is rather comic than tragic: — first the humour of the incidental, then of the essential or real, and gradually of the satirical; afterwards the accession of the romantic, pathetic, and sublime; the wonderful, the allegorical, and

[1] *Representative English Comedies*, p. xxiv.

the mock-ideal; and finally of the scenic and sensational. Of course beneath this woof of cumulative art and colour there is the warp of the original intention: the mystery, the sacrifice, the lesson. The presence of the serious and supernal goes without saying; but it is in the increment of other qualities that the transmutation of the spectacle from liturgy to popular drama is most readily to be observed.

Of the Old Testament, that is, the earlier Chester and N-town plays, the most useful for our present purpose are *The Death of Abel* and *Noah's Flood.* With them may be considered the Cornish version. The Cornish miracles present us with dramatic situations in the liturgical-epical germ, and characters in the undifferentiated "rough." The *Cain*, for instance, is but boor and niggard; his possibilities for comedy are undeveloped, but it is impossible that they should long be repressed. The devils, indeed, who come forward like a chorus at the end of each important scene, were probably pressed into the service of merriment; but the dramatic motive for which they exist is serious, and the part assigned to them is more consistent than in any of the other cycles. The Chester play of *Cain*, a conglomerate running from the Creation to the death of Abel, is not only one of the crudest of the cycle (much more so, for instance, than the sacrifice of Isaac based upon the Brome Play), but one of the most naïve on the subject. The character of the potential fratricide, with his canny offering of the earless corn that grew next the way, and his defiant "God, thou gotteste noe better of me, Be thou never so gryme," is manifestly nearer the primitive conception than the Cayme of York or Wakefield. He is not yet wit, wag,

and dare-devil. The episode in the Chester is didactic, but still realistic; less imaginative than in the York or Wakefield, but creative. Evidently more modern than the Chester play, which it somewhat resembles, is the *Cain and Abel* of the *Ludus Coventriæ* or N-Town. The villain is well-conceived, and elaborated with pith and humour. He discusses the Almighty with a worldly wisdom that remotely approaches that of the Wakefield, and he expresses his opinion of Abel —

Among all fools that go on ground
I hold that thou be one of the most:
To tithe [give away in tithes] the best that is most sound,
And keep the worst that is near lost —

with somewhat the same vivid and natural use of the vernacular. The action between the brothers is more elaborate than in Chester, but the dramatic quality depends rather upon dialogue than development of the situation. Its versification is certainly not that of the earliest stage of the cycle to which it belongs, and its lyrical quality might even indicate a later period of composition than the corresponding plays in the York and Wakefield; but it is not derived from either of them.

The development of a situation from the serious to the humorous is admirably illustrated by still another play of this earlier group. In the dramatisation of the Flood, the Cornish cycle presents the serious aspect of the naïve conception. Noah and his wife are on affectionate terms; she is obedient and helpful. It has not occurred to the writer to introduce an extraneous interest, as, for instance, that of conjugal strife. The play is interesting, however, because it displays some slight ability to discriminate characters. Likewise unconscious of comic possibilities is the N-Town play of the Flood. Though probably of later composi-

tion than the corresponding plays in other cycles, it is, in its greater part, one of the earlier, though not of the earliest plays of its own cycle. The characters (the sons' wives now begin to play a part), pious, prosaic, and uninteresting, are perfunctorily portrayed, but the construction of the play is ingenious, especially in its manipulation of the episode of Lamech, not as an extraneous action, but as a factor in the organic development of the motive; a hint of a sub-plot. In the Chester play, on the other hand, the characters are distinct and consistently developed. The comic episodes are natural and justifiable, for they serve to display, not to distort, character, and they grow out of the dramatic action. They are, moreover, varied, and, to some extent, cumulative. This play is indeed a vast dramatic advance upon the N-Town. It is approximately on the same plane of dramatic development as the York play of *The Flood*, and should be considered with reference to it, although in spite of one or two unique resemblances in language and conception,[1] neither pageant can be regarded as dependent upon the other.

It is noteworthy that the York play on the building of the Ark, one of the earliest of that cycle, is serious. The play on the Flood, however, which is in a somewhat later stanza, indulges in an altercation between Noah and his wife. The humour of this in turn is surpassed by that of the Chester, so also the technique. While in the York the amusing episode is sudden and of one sequence, in the Chester the clouds upon the domestic horizon gather with artistic reluctance, and, when they burst, refresh the soil in more than one spot. Noah is not yet

[1] Y. VIII, 41; Ch. III, 41. Uxor wishes to rescue her "commodrys," etc.; appearance of the rainbow.

the henpecked husband of later comedy, though prophetic thereof. Peaceably inclined, but capable of a temper, he serves God and apostrophises the perversity of women. The possibilities of his wife's character are cunningly unfolded. At first apparently amenable to reason, her progress toward "curstness" is a study in the development of character. Few situations in our early drama are better conceived than her refusal at the critical moment to enter the Ark unless her gossips are also taken aboard. Cam's "Shall we *all* feche her in?" the drinking song, — a rollicking song, too, with the lilt, "Back and side, go bare, go bare," — Noah's collapse of temper and the *alapam auri*, all these are good fooling, and must have left our ancestors thirsty for more. The "business" is of course enhanced by the multiplication of participants, by the solicitude of the children, and the apathy of the gossips. The song, I am afraid, is a later addition; but even without that the appropriateness of diction to the naïve (not vague or poetic) statement of details marks an essential advance in realism.

CHAPTER XI

THE YORK SCHOOLS OF HUMOUR AND REALISM

The York cycle affords very few situations ministering to the humour of the incidental. Such as are of that character must be assigned to more than one period of composition; none, however, is to be found in the plays which, according to philological tests, belong to the formative stage of the cycle.[1] This is but usual, for while the pageants were illustrating only the more important events of the church calendar, and were still reminiscent of their ecclesiastical origin, opportunity for ludicrous situations was limited: we find a touch of nature here and there perhaps; but not more.

All approaches to the comic in the plays of York — the abusive behaviour of Cain, the quarrel between Noah and his wife, the attempt of the shepherds to mimic the angelic choir, the beadle's intrusion upon the loves of Pilate and Percula, the effort of Herod and his sons "to have gaudis full goode and games or we go" with the prisoner brought to trial, and the failure of their bluster, threats, and shouting, to "gete one worde" out of him

[1] Probably II, X, XI, XX, XXIII, XXIV, XXVII, XXXV, XXXVII, and those parts of XII, XV, and XVII which also show connections with the typical northern septenar stanza. (Davidson, *Engl. Myst. Plays*, p. 144, would also add IX, second part of Noah. I do not agree.)

— may be safely attributed to schools, or periods, of composition which we shall style the middle and the later. A comparative study of the versification, phraseology, and occasion of these passages leads me, moreover, to the conclusion that the original comic parts of the *Sacrificium of Cayme and Abell*,[1] of the *Noe and His Wife*, and of the *Shepherds*, are of a humorous master of what we may call the middle period.[2]

The Beadle and Herod episodes are of the later school and are realistic. They occur in the *Dream of Pilate's Wife* and the *Trial before Herod* — plays which themselves form the core of a group of six that in literary style, conversational method, dramatic action and technique, might very well be the work of one individual. These six are XXVI, *The Conspiracy to Take Jesus;* XXVIII, *The Agony and Betrayal;* XXIX, *Peter's Denial; Jesus before Caiaphas;* XXX, *Pilate's Wife*, etc; XXXI, *Herod;* XXXIII, *Second Trial before Pilate Continued*, and probably XXXII, *Purchase of the Field of Blood.* The subjects are such as might reasonably have been used for an expansion of the cycle to accommodate the increasing number of guilds in York, at a time after the more important and obvious religious events had been dramatised. The materials are practically the same for these six plays, and are subjected in each case to the same free handling.[3] The somewhat

[1] The Brewbarret passage as it stands is later, but it probably represents the earlier Garcio who was the origin of the Wakefield Pikeharness.

[2] To this period I would in general assign also the serious and romantic plays of a scriptural character not included in the lists here indicated as of the first and third periods; for instance, the series of Joseph and Mary plays.

[3] While there are good metrical reasons for doubting whether the plays dealing with the Magi and the Innocents are by the same hand, there are

alliterative, experimental tendency of versification marks them all. Not only are the experimental or transitional stanzaic forms of this group of plays, the excessive alliteration, the substitution of anapæstic ease and rapidity for the regular beat and stiffer movement, indications of a later date, but the style itself is that of a different author, or school, retaining the facile idiom of the earlier days, but substituting for the old-fashioned humour an attempt at realistic portrayal of life, and for the homespun wit a bombast and abuse which, though idiomatic, are sometimes wearisome. The bombast is chiefly from the mouths of Pilate and Herod. The realism and other such advance in dramatic technique leap to the eye in the conduct of Caiaphas and Annas, their cunning, their virulence, their knowledge of the shady side of contract law; in the careful portraiture of Judas, who "wolde make a merchaundyse with the high priests their myscheffe to marre"; of his shifts for gain, his remorse when the triumph gutters; in the grim humour of the Janitor (the precursor of Shakespeare's Porter of hell-gate), — his reply to the arch-conspirator applying for admission, "Thy glyfftyng[1] is so grimly thou gars my harte growe,"[2] . . . "thou lokist like a lurdane his liffelod hadde lost," and his description of him to the "Dukes":

> A hyne helte-full[3] of ire, for hasty he is . . .
> I kenne hym noght, but he is cladde in a cope
> He cares[4] with a kene face uncomely to kys;—

indications throughout of the influence of the realistic master or school. See Kamann, *Die Quellen d. York Plays*, Anglia X, 210, *u. s. w.* and Herttrich, *Studien zu d. York Plays*, Breslau, 1886.

[1] glance. [2] fear.
[3] hind full to the hilt. [4] wends.

in the common sense of the beadle in the *Dream* who, knowing literally the laws, would send the lady home, ere "the day waxe ought dymme,"

> For scho may stakir[1] in the strete,
> But scho stalworthely stande;
> Late hir take hir leve while that light is;

in the curtain side of Pilate and his lady; in the discriminate drawing of women from Percula and her maid down to the Mulier who detects Peter and taunts him with falsehood:

> Itt were grete skorne that he schulde skape, . . .
> Wayte nowe, he lokis like a brokke,[2]
> Were he in a bande for to bayte;
> Or ellis like a nowele in a stok,[3]
> Full prevaly his pray for to wayte,

and Peter's plea that her accusation be rejected, —

> For women are crabbed, that comes them of kynde;

in the vivid brutality of the soldiers, the minute and horrible detail of their conversation, the quick retort and apt, the picturesque phrase, the elaborate dramatic dialogue, sometimes long-winded, to be sure; in the unconscious but skilful distinction between characters somewhat similar, Caiaphas, Annas, Pilate, Herod, and the control of supernumeraries; in the interplay of the pathetic, the wonderful, and the fearful; in the accumulation of scenes within the act, and the frequent use of dramatic surprise. These and other features of the kind characterise the York school of realism. So peculiar and at the same time uniform is the technique that its interpolation may be detected in plays not characterised by

[1] she may stagger. [2] badger. [3] an owl on a stump.

the transitional and elaborate verse structure of the group, but written in an earlier ecclesiastical stanza; and even at times in plays marked by the typical twelve-line septenar stanza of the parent cycle. Wherever the York realist has inserted, elaborated, revised, or recast,[1] he has left his unquestionable mark, though side by side with passages just as undoubtedly of earlier date.

But if these six or seven Pilate and Herod plays are to be attributed to one author, then that author is more or less responsible also for three other plays, XXXVI–XXXVIII, the *Mortificacio*, the *Harrowing*, and the *Resurrection*. For in two of the former group, *Pilate's Wife* and the *Second Trial*, he has quoted from memory and adapted to the stanzaic form portions of a northern middle English *Gospel of Nicodemus*. Other passages from this metrical *Gospel* are in like fashion incorporated in the *Mortificacio*, *Harrowing*, and *Resurrection*. No other plays in this or other cycles utilise the metrical version of the *Nicodemus;* and the adaptations here are of such a kind as to preclude the possibility of their insertion by ordinary copyists from the original text. The *Mortificacio* (XXXVI) with its elaborate and unique stanza is an original production substituted by our playwright for some older play. The *Harrowing* and the *Resurrection* (XXXVII, XXXVIII) are survivals, in earlier stanzaic form, which he has remodelled. If we assume, and not without reason, that he also retouched the *Christ Led up to Calvary* (XXXIV) and the *Crucifixion* (XXXV), we may regard him as the Passion Playwright of York. For only one play of the series beginning with the *Conspiracy* (XXVI) and ending with

[1] For instance, certain overalliterated and accented Herodiacs and other regalities in XI, XVI, XVII.

the *Resurrection* (XXXVIII) evidently lacks his influence; and that is the *Last Supper* (XXVII), — one of the pageants of the original didactic stage of the cycle.

The longer one studies these York plays, the more is one persuaded that not only were there three York periods or schools, but that there was at least one playwright in each of the latter two who distinctly contributed to the development of English drama. A playwright of the middle period, to which belong *Caym*, *Noe and His Wife*, and *The Angels and Shepherds*, is characterised by an unsophisticated humour; the distinctive playwright of the later or realistic period is marked by his observation of life, his reproduction of manners, his dialogue, and the plasticity of his technique: whether in presentation of the comic, or of the tragic and horrible, aspect of his narrative.

That the later school or period was influenced by the manner of its predecessor is further indicated by the fact that of its two most efficient stanzaic forms, one, namely, that used in the *Conspiracy*, is anticipated (though in simpler iambic beat) by that of *Noe*, the typical play of the middle period, the school of humours, while the other, the stanzaic form, of which variants are found in *The Mortificacio* and *The Second Trial*, has its germ probably in *The Cayme* of that same middle period.

The rhyme-scheme of the *Noe* is a b a b a b a b^4 c^3 d^3 c^4 c^4 c^4 d^3 in iambs varied with anapæsts, thus:

Filius. Fadir, I have done nowe as ye comaunde,
My modir comes to you this daye.
Noe. Scho is welcome, I wele warrande,
This worlde sall sone be waste awaye.
Uxor. Where art thou, Noye.

Noe. Loo! here at hande,
Come hedir faste, dame, I thee praye.
Uxor. Trowes thou that I wol leve the harde lande
And tourne up here on toure deraye?[1]
Nay, Noye, I am nought bowne
To fonde nowe over there ffelis,[2]
Doo barnes, goo we and trusse to towne.
Noe. Nay, certis, sothly than mon ye drowne.
Uxor. In faythe, thou were als goode come downe,
And go do som what ellis.

The rhyme-scheme of the *Conspiracy* of the Realistic school is the same; but the octave is in septenars, and the triplet c c c is in trimeters.

The rhyme-scheme of the other perfected stanza of the realistic York school, as seen in the *Mortificacio*, a b a b b c b c^3 d^1 e e e^2 d^3, is merely an expansion of that of the *Caym* of the earlier school, which runs thus, in iambics, a b a b b c^4 d^1 b c c^4 d^2:

Caym. We! Whythir now in wilde waneand[3]
Trowes thou I thynke to trusse of towne?
Goo, jape thee, robard jangillande,[4]
Me liste nought nowe to rouk nor rowne.[5]
Abell. A! dere brothir, late us be bowne
Goddis biddyng blithe to fulfille,
I tell thee.
Caym. Ya, daunce in the devilway, dresse thee downe,
For I wille wyrke even as I will.
What mystris thee,[6] in gode or ille,
Of me to melle thee.

[1] confusion.
[2] I 'm not ready just now to voyage over the fells.
[3] Oh, whither now, with a wanion (curse).
[4] Go, mock thyself, jangling thief.
[5] I have no mind to bow or whisper.
[6] Why needst thou.

The Mortificacio makes a quatrain out of the first b c, rhymes the triplet, and slides into anapæsts; and so doing prepares not only the best stanzaic instrument of the York realistic school, but at the same time the prototype of the brightest, wittiest, and most effective verse-form of the finest plays of the neighbouring town of Wakefield.

With these two stanzaic forms the realistic school, so far as we may conclude from the mutilated condition of surviving plays, seems to experiment; and the second of them, that of the *Mortificacio*, may be regarded as the final and distinctive outcome of York versification. To the leading playwrights of each of these schools, the former the best humourist, the latter the best realist of the York drama, — to these anonymous composers of the most facile and vivid portions of the York cycle, our comedy owes a still further debt; for from them it would appear that a poet of undoubted genius derived something of his inspiration and much of his method and technique, — our first great comic dramatist, the anonymous Player-Clerk of Wakefield.

CHAPTER XII

THE WAKEFIELD MASTER

His Relation to the Schools of York

In order to show the more plainly the indebtedness of our first great comic dramatist to the leading dramatists of the York cycle, I must for a few paragraphs enlarge upon the treatment already accorded to this subject in my edition of *Representative English Comedies*.

We know that Wakefield actors sometimes played in the *Corpus Christi* plays of York, and it was only natural that the smaller town should borrow from the dramatic riches of its metropolitan neighbour. We are therefore not surprised to find in the Wakefield cycle a number of plays which are in large part literally taken from the York cycle, the *Pharao* from York XI, the *Pagina Doctorum* from Y. XX, the *Extractio Animarum* from Y. XXXVII, the *Resurrectio Domini* from Y. XXXVIII, the *Judicium* from Y. XLVIII. None of these borrowings or of their originals is in either of the perfected stanzaic forms of the later York schools — humorous and realistic — of which mention was made in the preceding chapter, but in altogether simpler and cruder measures. In the Wakefield *Ascension*, and the Wakefield *Conspiracy*, however, which in other respects betray their derivation from earlier metres and discarded portions of the York cycle, there are embedded occasional variations of the later

York strophes evidently in transition toward their final adaptation by the master-dramatist of Wakefield. In stanza 57 of the Wakefield *Ascension*, for instance, we find a variant of one of the best stanzas of York — that of the *Mortificacio* — a b a b b c b c^3 d^1 e^2 e^2 e^2 d side by side with a tentative form of the final Wakefield stanza, and very much like it; and in the Wakefield *Conspiracy*, 97–100, we find similar variants of the other favourite stanza of the York realistic school, the a b a b a b a b c d c c c d of the York *Conspiracy*, with its octave in septenars, and sestet in trimeter. In the Wakefield *Fflagellacio*, moreover, the four opening stanzas of a transitional York strophe — a b a b a b a b^4 c^1 d d d ^{2} c^2, are immediately followed by twenty-four in the Wakefield master's improvement upon that form. Elsewhere there occurs a similar juxtaposition. It is therefore beyond doubt that the composer of the perfected York-Wakefield stanza, such as appears in a remarkable group of the Wakefield plays, must have been influenced consciously or indirectly by the later York school of dramatic composition and by the humorous school of the middle York period, from which the later school derived much of its artistic technique. About one-quarter of the Wakefield cycle, a quarter which for other reasons, linguistic, stylistic, dramatic, and social, one is tempted to ascribe to a single author, is couched in a stanzaic form of which the following is an example:

I thank it, God, —
  Hark ye what I mene —
Ffor even or for od
  I have mekyll tene;[1]

[1] sorrow.

As hevy as a sod
I grete with myn een
When I nap on my cod,[1]
For care that has bene,
And sorow.
All my shepe ar gone,
I am not left oone,
The rott has them slone;
Now beg I and borow.

This thirteen-line stanza, rhyming a b a b a b a b^2 c^1 d d d^2 c^2, is the evident outgrowth, by combination and modification, of the York *Mortificacio* and *Conspiracy* stanzas, of which I have just spoken. Sometimes, indeed, a three-accented line occurs among the first eight, showing the more plainly the derivation from the *Mortificacio*. This resemblance is, however, ordinarily obscured by the fact that the Wakefield stanza has been preserved in manuscript and print in a nine-line mould — the first four lines of which represent the first eight of the thirteen-line stanza, thus:

I thank it, God | hark ye what I mene,
Ffor even or for od | I have mekyll tene;
As hevy as a sod | I grete with myn eene
When I nap on my cod, | for care that has bene.

This nine-line stanza, with its involved rhymes in the first quatrain, is in all probability the Wakefield development of the thirteen- and fourteen-line stanzas of the York *Mortificacio* and *Conspiracy*. Whether the rapid beat and frequently recurring rhyme are a conscious elaboration of the York or a happy find or accident, the stanzaic result is an accurate index of the superiority in spirit and style achieved over their congeners of York by these comedies of Wakefield.

[1] pillow.

The Wakefield cycle had completed what Mr. Pollard fitly calls an older didactic period, of which the product is couched in couplets (a a^4) or in various forms of the six-line stanza a a^4 b^3 c c^4 b^3, beloved by early metrical romance and used predominatingly in the Chester plays; it had indeed made most of its borrowings from York (in the a b a b a b a b^4 c d c d^3 and similar simple metres) when the humorist or humorists of the nine-line stanza took it in hand. In the *Creation*, the *Isaac*, the *Jacob*, the *Processus Prophetarum*, the *Cæsar Augustus*, the *Annunciation*, the *Salutation*, the *Purification*, and the *St. Thomas* — all of the older period — no nine-line stanza occurs. But at the close of the *Mactacio Abel*, which in other metrical respects is of the didactic cycle, we find two of the nine-line stanzas in their thirteen-line formation and entirely in the realistic Wakefield vein. In one of the five plays derived from the York cycle, namely, the *Judicium*, stanzas 16 to 48, and 68 to 76 in the nine-line Wakefield stanza, have been inserted. Of the two plays which show a general resemblance to a corresponding York, one, the *Herod*, is in this stanza, and to the other, the *Conspiracy*, a dozen of the stanzas are prefixed. The *Fflagellacio* (XXII), the second half of which is an imitation, sometimes loose, sometimes literal, of York XXXIV (*Christ Led Up to Calvary*), opens with twenty-three of these stanzas — nearly the whole of the original part. One of them, No. 25, is, by the way, based upon stanza 2 of that part of York XXXIV which is *not* taken over by the Wakefield play. In the Wakefield *Ascension*, which adapts, but in no slavish manner, a few passages from the York XLIII, we find two of this playwright's nine-line stanzas;[1] and

[1] Stanza 57 might just as well be arranged like stanza 58.

in the Wakefield *Crucifixion*, which has some slight reminiscence of York XXXV and XXXVI, we find one. In that part of the Wakefield less directly, or not at all, connected with the York cycle, four whole plays, the *Processus Noe*, the two *Shepherds' Plays*, and the *Buffeting*, and occasional portions of other plays[1] are written in this stanza.

This contribution in the nine-line stanza amounts, as has been said, to approximately one-fourth of the cycle; and allowing for modifications due to oral and scribal transmission, it is of one language and phraseology. Not merely the identity of stanza and diction, however, leads one to suspect an identity of authorship; it is the prevalence in all these passages, but not in others, of spiritual characteristics in approximately the same combination — realistic and humorous qualities singularly suitable to the development of a vigorous national comedy. "If any one," says Mr. Pollard, "will read these plays together, I think he cannot fail to feel that they are all the work of the same writer, and that this writer deserves to be ranked — if only we knew his name! — at least as high as Langland, and as an exponent of a rather boisterous kind of humour, had no equal in his own day." And, speaking of the *Mactacio Abel*, where we lack the evidence of identity of metre, Mr. Pollard adds, "The extraordinary youthfulness of the play and the character of its humour make it difficult to dissociate it from the work of the author of the *Shepherds' Plays*, and I cannot doubt that this, also, at least in part, must be added to his credit."[2] I had come to a

[1] XXIV, 1–5, 56–59; XXVII, 4. Passages in a closely similar stanza are XXII, 1–4; XXIII, 2; XXVII, 30. On the order of the Wakefield Plays, see also Bunzen, *Kritik d. Wakefield Mysterien*, p. 19.

[2] *The Towneley Plays*, Introd., p. xxii.

similar conclusion before reading Mr. Pollard's opinion, and I may say that I detect the Wakefield master in the *Processus Talentorum* as well; for though the stanzaic form of that pageant is not his favourite, the humour, the dramatic technique, and the phraseology are closely reminiscent of him. In this revising and editing process, the Wakefield master was brought into touch with the York schools of comic and realistic composition. What he derived from those schools and what he added, may be gathered from a comparative view of the related portions of these cycles. Let us consider a typical instance or two of each kind in both York and Wakefield.

His Relation to the School of Humour

Of the York school of *humour* the plays dealing with the Flood are an admirable example. One, *The Building of the Ark*, is serious and of early composition. We may dismiss it from the present consideration. The other, *Noe and His Wife*, is of the middle period; but it is of the earliest stage of comic production in the cycle. The action lacks the variety of its Wakefield correspondent, and, as we have already seen, of the Chester; but the characterisation is discriminating and distinct. In the first scene Noe contemplates his preparation for the flood, and sends his sons for their mother. He appears to be pious and long-suffering, but his wife is a shrew from the beginning. In the second scene, when bidden to the ark, she "wol come no narre." But her curiosity gets the better of her; she cannot sit still till she has discovered what Noe means. In the third scene, before the ark, "business" waxes furious; and the strife of tongues keeps pace, brisk, witty, and natural. Here we

discover the first artistically constructed woman in English comedy. She won't enter the ark — for a variety of reasons, in ordering which the dramatist has displayed no slight knowledge of the probabilities. "Where art thou, Noe?" (He bids her embark quickly.) "Why should I leave the hard land? . . . I'm not fain for any voyage of discovery, especially in that old ark. . . . Come, children, let's trusse to towne." "Drown? sayst thou? Now, Noe, thou drivelest fast; art well-nigh mad; I am aghast. Farewell, *I* will go home again." (He seeks to detain her.) "Hello! Thou wert as good let me go my gait." (Noe calls upon the sons to help: they persuade her that the world will surely sink.) "What's that? Alas, that I this news should hear! Well, then, I must hie me home and pack." (Noe's temper breaks loose.) "What, not 'trusse my tolis.' Noe, thou mightst have let me wit what thou didst these hundred years while thou letst me sit at home." (He apologises, saying it was "Goddis wille.") "God's will? Psha! Take that." (He "gets a clowte.") "God's will again? 'Thou shulde have witte *my* will, If I wolde assent there till, Now first I fynde and feele, Why thou hast to the forest sought.' Well if I must escape from scathe, I would 'my commodrys and my cosynes bathe' went with us in company." That hope proving vain, this admirable matron subsides and passes into the ark. Her daughters comfort her, and Noe rules with a chastened joy. In the fourth scene the conversation is biblical and more general, the birds are sent forth, and at last Noe beholds the "hills of Hermonye." Once more Uxor breaks out in lament for her kin and company. "Dame, all are drowned," retorts Noe; "let be thy din."

Here we have, then, a comic episode with an attempt at "business," the rudiments of characterisation, and a commendable naturalness and ease of conversation.

Now, the Wakefield dramatist, whether we regard the stanzaic form of his *Noe* as derived from or suggested by the York play or not, certainly appears to have been acquainted with the York treatment of the subject. The plays agree in details which, at the same time, distinguish them from those of other cycles. The Wakefield *Processus Noe* belongs to the third or artistic stage of composition in its own cycle. It is in five scenes, and in each of them it improves upon its congener of York. The fable no longer constitutes a comic episode nor a mere string of such episodes; nor is it exactly a farce. It may be described as a comic history. Coarse as the quarrelling may be, and uproarious the fun, the play gives evidence of shrewd observation; it abounds with realistic touches, confidential asides, contemporary nicknames, assorted terms of abuse, and a rich, varied rustic philosophy. The humour is of a piece with that of the earlier York school; the realism, of a piece with the later; the play as a whole is the work of a genius who knows not only to hold the mirror up to nature, but to select the nature which shall be mirrored.

Scene I. The Forest. Enter Noe, bewailing the evil days:

He has served God "sex hundreth yeres and odd,"

And now I wax old,
Seke, sory and cold,
As muk apon mold
I widder away.

Yet he will cry for himself and his fry that they be brought to God's hall in heaven. God appears above,

The Elect Who Have Lived Before and Those Who Have Lived After the Deluge
From "L'Apocalypse en français"

repenting that He ever made man, and proposing to "fordo all this medill-erd with floods"; but Noe and his wife He will spare, for they would never strive with Him, nor Him offend. He informs Noe of his purpose, and commands the building of the ark. God, however, appears to be less conversant with the character of Noe's Uxor than her husband, or more tolerant; for no sooner has the Deity disappeared than Noe expresses a doubt as to how this pattern of womankind will take the news:

Lord, homward will I hast as fast as that I may;
My wife will I frast[1] what she will say. [*Exit Deus.*
And I am agast that we get som fray
Betwixt us both:
For she is full tetchee,
For litill oft angre,
If anything wrang be,
Soyne is she wroth. *Tunc perget ad uxorem.*

Scene II. Noe's House. "God spede, dere wife, how fare ye?" "The best I can; the worse now I see thee." He says that he bears ill-tidings. She opines that he were worthy to be clad in Stafford blue (like a flunkey), for he is always adread of something:

For I dare be thi borrow,[2]
From even unto morrow,
Thou spekis ever of sorrow;
God send thee onys thi fill.

Women may well curse all ill husbands, she adds — and one such, by Mary, has she; but she knows how to bide her time to "qwyte hym his mede":

[1] try. [2] security.

Noe. We! hold thi tong, ram-skyt, or I shall thee still.
Uxor. By my thryft, if thou smyte I shall turne thee untill.
Noe. We shall assay as tyte[1]: have at thee, Gyll!
Apon the bone shall it byte (*He strikes her*).
Uxor. Ah, so, mary! thou smytis ill!
Bot I suppose
I shall not in thi det,
Fflyt of this flett![2]
Take thee ther a langett
To tye up thi hose! (*She strikes back.*)

And so the quarrel goes: she promising three blows for two, biting and shrieking withal, till Noe declares for a truce for he has other work to do. She says no man shall tarry him: as for her "to spyn will I dress me." He begs her to pray for him busily. "Even as thou prays for me!" and *exit Gyll.*

Scene III. The Forest as before. Noe falls to work upon the ark; in the first stanza lays out the measurements and bends his bones to the tree; in the second, takes off his gown and works in his coat at the mast and wonders when his back will break; in the third makes top and sail, helm and castle, and drives the nails through the boards; in the fourth, builds window and door and three chambers "as God had said," pitches them well, thanks God that the labour is fulfilled, and hies him to fetch his wife and meiny.

Scene IV. Noe's House. "Why, syr, what ails you?" cries she. No one is hurting you, but if you feel afraid you had better run away. "There is other yarn on the reel, my dame," replies he, and proceeds to inform her of the approaching flood. She is dazed, and dodders for

[1] try it at once. [2] flee from this flat.

fear of the tale, and with her sons prepares to "trus the gear"; but when it comes to getting it into the ark, —

I was never barred ere, as ever myght I the[1]
In sich an oostre[2] as this.
In faith I can not fynd
Which is before, which is behynd,
Bot shall we here be pyned,
Noe, as have thou blis?

Noe. Dame, as it is skill, here must us abide grace;
Therefore, wife, with good will, come into this place.

Uxor. Sir, for Jak nor for Gyll, will I turne my face
Till I have on this hill, spon a space
On my rok.[3]

The heavens open; it thunders and lightens; down come halls and bowers, castles and towers.

Therefor, wife, have done! Come into ship fast.

Uxor. Yei, Noe, go cloute thi shoon; the better will they last.

The sons' wives take a hand, but in faith yet will she spin; all in vain do they carp. "If ye like," says one more wily than the rest, probably Japhet's *mulier*, "If ye like, ye may spin, mother, in the ship." And Noe announces the second call for embarkation, "dame, on my friendship." Whereupon, Gyll —

Wheder I lose or wyn, in faith, thi felowship,
Set I not at a pyn, this spyndill will I slip
Apon this hill
Or I styr oone fote.

She changes her mind when the water "nighs so near that she sits not dry," and hies her toward ship with a

[1] thrive. [2] hostelry. [3] distaff.

"byr." "In faith, and for your long tarrying," cries Noe, "ye shall lick on the whip." She retorts, "Big words don't hurt." He bids her cry him "Mercy!" She wishes she were a widow, she would n't grudge a mass-penny for *his* soul; and she sees many a wife in the audience that would hail like deliverance. Noe rejoins with sprightly advice:

Ye men that has wifis, whyls they ar yong,
If ye luf youre lifis chastice thare tong:
Me thynk my hert ryfis both levyr and long[1]
To see sich stryfis wedmen emong,
Bot I,
As have I blys,
Shall chastyse this.
Uxor. Yit mary ye mys,
Nicholl nedy!

More picturesque repartee. He cudgels her and catches a beating in turn. In fine, all passion spent, they enter the ark.

Scene V. In the Ark The parents are upbraided by the three sons. "We will do as ye bid us; we will be no more wroth, dear bairns," and Noe "hents to the helm." Gyll takes interest in the spectacle of the heavens and of the rising flood. In good counsel and obedience she continues, till the "hillys of Armonye" are touched, and the voyage brought to its traditional conclusion.

To the crude conception, somewhat scanty humour, and deficient "business" of the York play the Wakefield has added the element of surprise (consider the satisfaction of the female spectators when Uxor retreats after having once consented to enter the ark), variety and rapidity of

[1] my heart bursts, and my liver and lungs.

action, vivid reproduction of human ways, and local manners, racy speech, familiar idiom — if not the thrust and parry, at any rate the quarter-staff of tongues, a reckless humour, and a rhythmic swing.

His Relation to the School of Realism

Passing now to those parts of the two cycles most marked by methods of the *realist*, and still confining our selection from the Wakefield plays to those written in the nine-line stanza, we note that approximately the same relation obtains between the realism of Wakefield and the later York School as that which held true of the humour of Wakefield and the middle school of York. As said before, the portraiture of manners by the York playwright appears to best advantage in some half-dozen plays, XXVI, XXVIII, XXIX, XXX, XXXI, XXXIII, etc., which elaborate the preliminaries of the crucifixion, especially those in which Herod, the Beadle, Caiaphas and Annas, Judas and the Janitor, Pilate and Percula, figure. The Herod of the York plays, wherever he appears, is of uniform character. But there are two entirely distinct presentments of him in the cycle of Wakefield: that of *Herod the Great*, written in the nine-line stanza, and that of the *Magi*, written in a different stanza (a a a b a b) and a more alliterative verse. The Herod of the latter is a chip of the York block, boastful and abusive, but aimless in his bombast, trusting to noise and a scattering fire; whereas the Herod of the former, in the Wakefield nine-line stanza, though he may rant and brag, is direct, personal, and concrete. He is of the stuff of the craftsman that plays him. The very lilt of his metre is provocative of laughter; so, also, are the metres of his *Nuncius:* the rapid succession of rhymes,

often double rhymes at that, the jocosity of vituperation, its figurative as well as mouth-filling finality —

> Ffor if I beggyn I breke ilka bone
> And pull fro the skyn the carcas anone,
> Yei, perde!

But it is when we consider the subtler qualities of style, mock-heroic and double-edged, that we descry the Master. In the grotesque cosmography of Herod's dominions —

> Tuskane and Turky,
> All Inde and Italy,
> Sicily and Surrey
> Drede hym and dowtys.
>
> From Paradyse to Padua, to Mount Flascon;
> From Sarceny to Susa, to Grece it abowne;
> From Egyp to Mantua, unto Kemptown;
> Both Normondy and Norwa lowtys to his crown;
> His renowne
> Can no tong tell,
> From heven unto hell;
> Of hym can none spell
> Bot his cosyn Mahowne;

in the reference to familiar interests of the audience, to the "Tales" of Boethius, the Epistles, the Holy Grail; in the sly literary criticism and the satire on ecclesiastical preferments (for Herod swears, if he lives in land the Councillor who moved the massacre of the infants shall yet be Pope); in the burlesque of that massacre — "Dame," courteously ventures the murderous *Miles*, "think it not ill, thy child if I kill"; in the bargaining between Herod with his knights and his promise of payment (next time he comes) — in all this there is a marked advance upon the portrayal of character and

manners and the verisimilitude of thought and expression afforded by the herodiacs of York. And this parallel is the more instructive because while the general treatment of this subject[1] in the Wakefield is so like that of the York, the common characteristics of these two versions are distinct from the Chester and N-Town plays. We, therefore, cannot but suppose that the chief dramatist of Wakefield took the York plays as his model. He achieves, however, an independent result.

The York Janitor and the Pilate, Percula and Beadle of the domestic scene, are not reproduced in the Wakefield cycle. The Judas, indeed, reappears in the *Conspiracy*, written in an old York metre and probably borrowed from a discarded York original; but there is no trace of the Wakefield Master in his construction. Wherever the dramatist of the nine-line stanza touches a character, he endows it with qualities unmistakable, and unknown to the other cycles — making for a more artistic realism. To the *Conspiracy*, for instance, he prefixes six stanzas, and in them causes Pilate, sitting upon the bench, to display a political shrewdness of which his continuator in the rest of the pageant was utterly incapable:

Ffor I am he that may make or mar a man;
Myself if I it say, as men of cowrte now can;
Supporte a man to-day, to-morn agans hym than,
On both parties thus I play, And fenys[2] me to ordan
The right;
Bot all fals indytars,
Questmangers and jurers,
And all thise fals outrydars,
Ar welcom to my sight.

[1] See Hohlfeld on W. XVI and Y. XIX.

[2] feigns.

This Pilate is the first trimmer in English comedy. His development continues through the first half of the Wakefield *Scourging*, and the whole of the *Talents*. He is a vastly improved edition of a quondam York Pilate, of whom traces can still be found in other parts of the Wakefield. The earlier Pilate was timid and ingenuous; the latter is full of subtlety, breeze, and wit, and wholly given over to jokes and Latin tags and macaronic verses. Like most of the characters created by the Master, he is of proverbial philosophy compact. The clue to the procurator's character as given above is repeated in the second stanza of the *Scourging*, the refrain of which is in the same words and verse as *Conspiracy*, 3, although the earlier part of the stanza doubles the metre of the nine-line stanza. This is interesting because it proves that there is some connection between the Master's productions and those of some Wakefield experimenter who followed or preceded him,[1] or that the Master was capable at times of varying his stanza.

In the Wakefield cycle there is, of course, much realism of a powerful and grim kind that cannot be attributed to the Player-clerk. The preparations for the crucifixion, the wrenching of Christ's body to fit the cross, the binding and the nailing, the jolting of the timber into the mortice, the jesting and jeering of the torturers, are a distinct counterpart of the *Crucifixio Cristi* of York. They bear no mark of our dramatist. Their art is the transcript of the physically horrible, their style the straightforward, grisly poetising of the "pynner" or the "paynter." How different the proverbial philosophy, the side-play, the shading of character, the subtle shift of motive and incident, the allusive quality, the ironic

[1] XXII, 1–4; XXIII, 2; XXVII, 30.

sophistry, the Latinism, the vocabulary, the sign-manual, in short, of the Player-clerk, may be seen if one turns to the Wakefield *Coliphizacio*, all of which is in his stanza, or to stanzas 5 to 27 of the *Flagellacio*, which are also undoubtedly his. In the latter play the difference stands out the more strikingly because the remaining and older half is based upon York XXXIV, *Christ Led Up to Calvary*, and from stanza 42 on literally copied from it. While portions written by the Master do not balk at the cruelty appropriate to the subject of buffeting and scourging, they refrain from repulsive detail.

The Wakefield Master is no sentimentalist. His anger is sudden as his sympathy. Always genially ironical, he displays in his revision of the *Judicium* his full power as a satirist. Here, as I have already elsewhere said, his hatred of oppression, his scorn of vice and self-love, his contempt of sharp and shady practice in kirk or court, upon the bench, behind the counter, and in the home, are welded into one and brought to edge and point. He strikes hard when he will, but he has the comic sense and spares to slay. We may hear him chuckling, this dramatic contemporary of Chaucer, as he pricks the bubble of fashion, lampoons Lollard and "kyrkchaterar" alike, and parodies the latinity of his age. When his demons speak, the syllables leap in rhythmic haste, the rhymes beat a tattoo, and the stanzas hurtle by. Manners, morals, folly, and loose living are writ large and pinned to the caitiff. But the poet behind the satire is ever the same, sound in his domestic, social, political philosophy, constant in his sympathy with the down-trodden and in his godly fear.

Doomsday is at hand: the souls have fled from hell; the devils, too, are out, and one here tells his fellow

that he must betake himself to judgment like a peer to Parliament. Up Watling Street shall be his way, but in sooth they had rather be making three whole pilgrimages to Rome. Their books they must take with them for evidence against the damned, and books they have full of all kinds of sinners:

> Of wraggers and wrears a bag full of brefes,
> Of carpars and cryars, of mychers and thefes,
> Of lurdans and lyars that no man lefys
> Of flytars, of flyars and renderars of reffys.[1]

The first demon asks if there is anger in their record. There is anger, and treachery, too. "Hast thou ought written there," says the first, "of the femynyn gendere?" "Yei, mo than I may bere," says the second, "of rolles forto render" —

> Thai are sharp as a spear, if thai seem but slender
> Thai ar ever in were if thai be tender,
> Ill fetyld;
> She that is most meke,
> When she semys full seke,
> She can rase vp a reke
> If she be well nettyld.[2]

"Make ready our tools," continues the first, "for we deal with no fools." "Yea, Sir," says the second, warningly, "it is high time for us to act," for —

> had domysday oght tarid
> We must have bigged hell more, the warld is so warid.[3]

[1] wranglers, wrigglers, carpers, cryers, pilferers, thieves, louts, liars that no man believes, quarrelers, "flyers," and restorers of stolen goods.

[2] They are ever in doubt; never ready; can stir up smoke when once well nettled.

[3] If Doomsday had been delayed, we must have built an addition to Hell, the world is so cursèd.

Devils and Cauldron

From "Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française"

Faith and truth have no feet upon which to stand, the poor people must bear all the burdens, God is no longer dreaded, and by that we know that doomsday is at hand. "Sir," says the second demon,

> it is saide in old sawes —
> The longere that day dawes —
> "Wars pepill wars lawes."

"I laugh," says the first demon, "at thy reason." To them enters then the hero of that ilk, Tutivillus, registrar to the devil, once their chief tollsman "and sithen courte rollar [recorder]," but now "master lollar [lollard]." He has brought in a single hour his thousands to hell: the fool who dresses finely and leaves his children breadless, and the woman who shrouds her ugliness with vanities, —

> When she is thus paynt,
> She makys it so quaynte,
> She lookys like a saynt, —
> And wars than the deyl.

Then, in rapid file, step forth for condemnation the fashions of the day and the souls that flock to the world below: harlots and bawds; liars, scolds, extortioners, usurers, and backbiters; so that in sooth the porter shall have old turning the key. Hell is full and doomsday can no longer be delayed.

Such is the flavour of the plays in nine-line stanza which it is comfortable, and perhaps not utterly unscientific, to attribute to some one poet: a younger contemporary of Chaucer, perhaps. No two men could have possessed a style compounded of elements in just such collocation and proportion or have produced results so uniform. Nor does any other writer of the Wakefield cycle approach this style.

His Masterpiece; and Other Attributions

When one considers the uniformity of style, temper, scholarship, and verse of the group of plays more or less inspired by the York schools of humour and realism — and their distinctive character, withal: their Latinity, joviality, and satiric indirection — one is tempted not merely to assign them to a single author, but with Leach and Pollard to figure him concretely as some whilom clerk of Oxford or of Cambridge: not a monk, indeed, but some "jolly Absalon" who played by times on "scaffold high" his Herod and his Pilate both, — mayhap his Noe, and Mak, the sheep-thief, too. I have mentioned in passing the masterpiece of the nine-line stanza in which Mak and the shepherds prelude the birth of Christ. This little English comedy, the *Secunda Pastorum*, gathers in itself the qualities already noted in the playwright's other work, and adds a technique surpassing that of any drama up to that time written.[1] The only preceding play that can bear comparison with it from the point of view of realism and of that shrewd reflection of contemporary conditions which makes for interest, is the *Prima Pastorum* of the same author. But the *Prima* is rather a dramatic idyll than a comedy; for though it possesses comic motive and dialogue, it lacks comic action. It is a pastoral picture in most diverting panels. What could be more humorous than the little scene where Gyb, going to buy sheep, quarrels with his friend Horne as to where he shall pasture them, though they are not yet bought, and shouts to his bell-wether to possess the

[1] In my *Star of Bethlehem*, as played by Mr. Ben Greet's company, an attempt has been made to revive this and other Nativity plays, and adapt them to modern requirements (Duffield and Company: N. Y., 1904).

land? When Horne won't let the imaginary wether obey, and Gyb threatens to break his head, up comes in a lucky moment Slowpace, discovers that they are matching castles in Spain, and, like a fourteenth-century Sam Weller, takes the conceit out of both by his story of Moll, who, while casting up the account of her fictitious flocks, absent-mindedly broke her pitcher into shards:

> "Ho, God," she sayde,
> But oone shepe yit she hade,
> The mylk pycher was layde,
> The skarthis was the tokyn.

To conclude the matter, Slowpace bids the disputants hold his mare while he shakes his sack empty to symbolise the condition of their wits.

Nothing like this had been produced by way of comic scene before, and few things by way of native humour. But the *Prima* cannot compare with the *Secunda* in movement. From that point of view the only play comparable is the *Shepherds' Play* of Chester. Whether that was written somewhat earlier or somewhat later, we cannot say; but that it resembles the Wakefield masterpiece in the attempt to reproduce pastoral life and manners is indubitable, though in technique, as well as tone and style, it is inferior.

The Chester pastoral opens with a shepherd gathering simples for his flock; and it furnishes us with a joint dinner like the Wakefield plays, with a wrestling match between the boy Trowle and his three masters, and with the singing of the angels and the usual colloquy concerning the Latin of the song. The boy Trowle, indeed a most lethargic and humorous lout, is one of the originals of miracle comedy. A blander mode than his of directing a passing traveller would be difficult to devise:

Yf any man come me bye
And would witte which waie were beste:
My leg I lifte up as I lye
And wishe hym the waie este or weste.

But the comic bustle of this pastoral is action without progress; the Wakefield *Secunda*, on the other hand, is plot within plot, developed through eight closely consecutive scenes, and crowded with action. The comic adventure is indeed but an episode, — this "sheep stealing of Mak," — but it has its beginning, middle, and end; the motive, the devices, and the progress of a comedietta in itself. It grows out of and belongs to the conditions with which the enveloping action opens, and its party of the second part are also dramatic persons in the main action. From every point of view — conception, construction, effect — up to the end of the Mak episode, it is quite on a level with *Pathelin vint au vin*, or with anything that John Heywood has written. In power of observation, as well as in the reproduction of every-day life, it excels *Tom Tyler*, *Thersytes*, or any other play written before the sixteenth century. As a work of dramatic genius this little play, with its home-made philosophy, home-made figures, and home-made humour, with its comic business, its sometimes boisterous spirits, its quiet and shrewd irony, its ludicrous diction, its revelation of rural manners, its simple and healthful creed, its radiant and naïve devoutness, its dramatic anticipations, postponements, and surprises, stands out English and alone, and a masterpiece.

The plot is so well known that an outline would be superfluous; but I doubt whether sufficient attention has been directed to the realistic portrayal of its characters: Coll, the first shepherd, who soliloquises concerning

political philosophy, a kind of later fourteenth-century populist whom it refreshes to grumble:

> It dos me good, as I walk thus by myn oone,
> Of this warld for to talk in maner of mone;

Gyb, the second shepherd, whose vein is of matrimonial philosophy, and whose dame —

> As sharp as a thystyll, as rough as a brere,
> Browed like a brystyll with a sowre-loten chere,[1]

who therefore counts it a marvel due to destiny that —

> Som men wyll have two wyfs and som men three
> In store —
> Som are wo that has any!

and Daw, the hind, whose philosophy is eclectic, who swears by the unborn Christ and Saint Nicholas, and "lets the world pass." He it is who sees "sudden sights in the darkness"; who warns of the midnight-stalking Mak; who makes that "Yoman" of the king lie safely down between them; it is he, too, who dreams of the stolen sheep and conducts the vain search therefor; and who, fortunately flinging back to Mak's home to give the hypothetical babe "that lytyll day starne" a "saxpence," lifts up the clout and diagnoses the fraud that has been practised upon them. Mak himself is a piece of characterisation of which a nineteenth-century dramatist need not be ashamed. Behold him slinking in by night with his habit of disguise and his "southern tooth" and his sanctimonious plaint —

> Now wold God I were in heven,
> For there wepe no barnes.[2]

[1] sour-looking face. [2] bairns.

Mark his delicate taste, his delicious hypocrisy! But mark with greater admiration still that worthy seconder of his wiles, his somewhat unduly prolific wife, Gyll, who, confined of the "borrowed sheep," declines the approach of visitors for no less reason than that —

> Ich fote that ye trede goys thorow my nese[1] —
> So hee!

This comedy, with its background of reality, and its atmosphere of worship when once the Stable is in sight, is the climax of the dramatic movement present in the York cycle and forwarded by those portions of the Wakefield which we have described. It so completely eclipses the York play of *The Angels and the Shepherds*, that if it were not for the effort of the Second York Shepherd to imitate the angelic choir, and the rustic naïveté of the adoration in the Stable, the kinship of the two plays would be difficult to trace. The N-Town, indeed, shows a closer resemblance to the York in matters of detail, and the Chester to the Wakefield, than the Wakefield and the York show to each other. It must, however, still be conceded that, in spirit and manner, the Wakefield *Prima* and *Secunda Pastorum*, though not derived from the corresponding York play, are but the full flower of the comic and realistic promise of the York cycle.

In the contributions passed in review there is enough to characterise a comic dramatist; but if we turn from the plays in the nine-line stanza to the only other distinctively comic pageants of the cycle, — namely, the *Mactacio Abel* and *The Talents*, — we cannot long refrain

[1] goes through my nose.

from deciding that they, also, owe somewhat to the Wakefield Master.

The Wakefield killing of *Abel* is probably a revision of an earlier play in its own cycle. It is certainly later than the York (VII), which is unfortunately a fragment, and not even itself one of the parent cycle. These, again, are more mature, and probably of later composition than the N-Town and Chester plays upon the subject, especially the latter. I have already said that the oldest treatment of the *Abel*, the Cornish, was destitute of humour. The next oldest, the Chester, is not only grim, but very crude. Its successor of N-Town conceives the churlish Cain of Chester with pith and merriment, but fails to elaborate the possibilities of action between the brothers. What is left of the York play is full of dramatic life: Cain is a swaggering devil, who curses God and His angel, and deliberately tries to thrash the latter. As the extant portion of this play may have suggested to the Wakefield the discussion between Cain and Abel, so the original servant or *garcio* of the York (who becomes Brewbarret in the later edition) was probably the prototype of Cayme's *garcio*, Pikeharnes, in the Wakefield. The *garcio* in both is the forerunner of the impudent underling in English comedy, and the Cayme is a model of rusticity and irreverence. The characterisation is effected largely by the contrast between Cayme's behaviour and Abel's. "God has ever yit byn my fo," cries the reckless skeptic of the Wakefield play. And when he has sought to defraud God of his burnt-offering and the Lord appears to rebuke him, —

> "Why!" cries he, "who is that hob-over-the-wall?
> We! who was that that piped so small? . . . "

The Wakefield *Abel* is an episode of painful reality, with a tragic element, to be sure, but with more of the spice of comedy than had appeared in previous plays upon the subject. The author is a close observer of the Wakefield swains; and here they live perennial with bucolic apothegm and pungent phrase, — cunning fellows, close-fisted, bargaining with the spiritual. "Never yet," says Cain, "have I borrowed a farthing of God"; he will consequently apportion to the Almighty but one-twentieth of the harvest, and that the worst. The relations between Cain and Pikeharnes are caught out of reality: the details of farm life, the ploughing, the objurgation of Donnyng, the mare. The technique of the play is also noteworthy for its "asides" and mock-echoes, its variety of scene, and its elaborate movement. The final reviser, our Wakefield Master, I think (for these that I have recited are ear-marks of his dramaturgy), has not only added the last two stanzas in his favourite form, but has lent spice to the first seven. It was probably he who, leaving the other stanzas much as they were, heightened the characterisation of Cain and his boy, enriched their speech with proverbs, and made of Abel something other than the milksop presented in the earlier cycles. My word for dialectal peculiarities is not worth much, but I must say that in the livelier parts of this play the language appears to be of a piece with that of the *Prima* and *Secunda Pastorum*.

The Processus Talentorum, or *The Casting of Lots*, gives evidence of three strata of composition, of which the last, an introduction of five stanzas and an epilogue of five more, is not only in the strophe but the phrase and temper of the Wakefield Master. The racy dialogue, the characterisation, and the rapid movement of

the play proper also betray the shaping hand of an artist. In many a humorous touch I think that I recognise the impress of ours. Nothing more natural than to revive the colours when one is framing the picture. The frame itself is in his most distinctive style, — quaint, original, brilliant, surprising. There is no mistaking him in the subtlety and satire, the goliardic verses of Pilate calling for silence and obedience, —

Stynt, I say! gyf men place: quia sum dominus dominorum!
He that agans me says: rapietur lux oculorum;
Therefor gyf ye me space: ne tendam vim brachiorum,
And then get ye no grace: contestor Iura polorum,
Caveatis;
Rewle I the Iurè,
Maxime purè,
Towne quoque rurè,
Me paveatis, —

He is in the double rhymes, the rapid lilt, the cognisance of contemporary foible and custom, the boisterous humour, and the gluttony of words. The play proper is cast principally in a stanzaic mould not elsewhere found in the Wakefield cycle. "Fellows," says the third torturer, when the three having agreed to cast dice with Pilate for the seamless coat, the highest throw falls to himself:

Felowse, in forward here have I fifteene!
As ye wote I am worthi, won is this Weed.
Pilatus. What, whistyll ye in the wenyande![1]
Where have ye been?
Thou shall abak, bewshere,[2] that blast I forbede.

[1] in the unlucky waning of the moon. [2] *beau sire.*

Tercius Tortor. Here are men us emang
Lele in our lay, will ly for no leyd
And I wytnes at thaym if I wroght any wrang.[1]

This hurrying a b a b^4 c^2 b^4 c^4 of iambs and anapæsts differs materially from its wooden congener of York XIV, XXI, and XXV, and has, if my memory serves me, no analogue in the other cycles. It fits itself readily to the adjacent stanzas of nine lines; it conveys at various points material suggestive of the nine-line versifier, and betrays his facile turn for comic situation.

Of the unique idiom of those through whom the Wakefield Master speaks sporadic instances have already been cited; but I cannot leave him without placing a few more on record. "Sir, as I am true knight," says the first torturer, "of my dame since I sucked had I never such a night"; and of the prophesying of Jesus, "He lies for the whetstone, I give Him the prize"; and, before the buffeting begins, "We shall teach Him I wot a new play of Yule." Says *Tortor Secundus* of the victim, "He sets not a fly-wing by Sir Cæsar full even." Cayphas, fretting that his sacerdotal position restrains him from striking Jesus, cries, "He that first made me clerk and taught me my lere, On books for to bark, the Devil give him care!"; and when Annas persuades him to desist,—"My heart is full cold, nearhand that I swelt; For tales that are told I bolne (burst) at my belt." When Jack the boy comes in to his masters, the quarrelling shepherds of the *Prima*, he casually remarks:

[1] Here are men among us, loyal in the law, who will lie for no people, I call them to witness.

Now God gyf you care, foles all sam;
Sagh I never none so fare bot the foles of Gotham.
Wo is hir that you bare, youre sire and youre dam:
Had she broght furth an hare, a shepe, or a lam,
Had bene well.
Of all the foles I can tell,
From heven unto hell,
Ye thre bere the bell;
God gyf you unceyll!

The rural wisdom of his Yorkshire craftsmen is similarly redolent of daily use. When Noe's Gyll complains, "We women may wary all ill husbands," and the patriarch retorts, "Ye men that has wives, Whiles they are yong, If ye love your lives Chastise their tongue," the audience beholds itself as in a mirror. *Primus Tortor* was not the first to philosophise: "It is better sit still, than rise up and fall"; and *Secundus* is but echoing the lore of the homely wise when he commits dicing to the Devil with "As Fortune assize, men will she make, — Her manners are nice, she can down and uptake." Pilate portrays the political trimmer that all knew, in his confession — "For like as on both sidys the iren the hammer makith play, So do I that the law has been in my kepyng"; and his counsellor but echoes public opinion when he upbraids this ruler with "Why should *I* not mell of those matters that *I* you taught? Though ye be prince peerless without any peer, Were not *my* wise wisdom, your wits were in waght [peril]; And that is seen express and plainly right here." Of the moralising of the *Secunda Pastorum* I have already spoken; the *Prima* is equally observant of the common lot. "Lord," grumbles Gyb, as he enters, "what they are well that hence are past, For they nought feel them

too downcast. . . . After our play in this world comes sorrow; after riches, poverty; horseman Jack Cope *walks* then, I ween. Rents are coming thick but my purse is weak; nay, if ill-luck will grind, may God from his heaven send grace." "Poor men," groans John Horne, "are in the dyke, and often Time mars; such is the world; no helpers are here." "Yea," rejoins Gyb,—

It is sayde full ryfe
A man may not wyfe
And also thryfe
And all in a yere.

No better index to the view of life of our mediæval workaday forefathers still endures than that afforded by their Miracle plays. No picture more ingenuous than that dramatised by the Player-clerk of Wakefield. And for technical skill, what Langland was to satire, Malory to prose fiction, and Chaucer to the metrical romance, that, if we but allow for the immaturity of the type, the Wakefield Master was to our mediæval drama.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TRANSITION TO THE ROMANTIC

ESPECIALLY IN THE LUDUS COVENTRIÆ AND THE MIDDLE PERIOD OF THE YORK

We shall now turn to the Chester and the *Ludus Coventriæ*, or N-Town, plays which are not of the Old Testament. Their comedy parts (at any rate) are probably of later date than the plays of York and Wakefield which have just been treated, but the undiluted comic passages are few. In the Chester we come across the excellent fooling of the *Shepherds' Play*, of which I have spoken in connection with the Wakefield *Secunda Pastorum*, — approximately of the same period; the delicious fling at the knightly ideals of romance, when Sir Launcelot of the Deep, and Sir Grimbald are introduced as braggadocio cavaliers sallying forth to slaughter innocents — a passage, perhaps of the end of the fourteenth century; and that well-inserted reference to contemporary manners, as late as 1524, in the lament of the "tavernere," the gentle gossip and "tapstere," who remains in hell after its harrowing.

Comic representations of real life in the later portions of the N-Town plays are also few. But, such as they are, — the pompous converse of the Doctors in the Temple, the unaffected precipitancy of the young man taken in adultery who escapes *Calligis non ligatis et braccas in manu tenens*, and Lord Lucifer's monologue on

the fashions of the day, — they must have leavened the general didacticism of the cycle with some flavour of actuality. Both vocabulary and verse would indicate that these passages belong by no means to an earlier period in the composition of the cycle; the allusions to dress in the last of them have been assigned to the latter half of the fifteenth century. A feeble attempt at the comic may be detected also in the *Adoration of the Shepherds*, but that appears to me to be suggested by a similar passage in the Chester. Though in its original form this play was one of the earliest of its cycle, certain verbal resemblances between its present form and that of the corresponding play of York would indicate later borrowing from that source as well.

But beside the comic of every-day manners and characters, there is evidence in some of these later pageants, especially those of N-Town, of that romantic element without which we can never realise the comic of the ideal. The Joseph and Mary plays are among our earliest romantic comedies, and as embodying a higher conception of the dramatic than most of the plays so far considered, it has seemed wise to gather them from all cycles into a single group.

The Chester play *From the Salutation to the Nativity*, may be passed with a word; for in original date of composition it is one of the oldest in the cycles, and though touched up by later hands, is still clumsy — neither a dramatic whole nor dramatic in the handling. It is merely a section of narrative measured off and draped about lay-figures for purposes of display. Occasionally a natural trait appears, as in the grumbling of Joseph over the payment of tribute, and the naïveté of his affection for

Mary; occasionally a gleam of the humorous, as in the punishment of the sacrilegious midwife, Salome. Another pageant of Chester, however, the *Purification*, which is evidently a late insertion between the *Flight into Egypt* and the *Christ in the Temple*, avails itself of the possibilities of wonder somewhat more fitly and in the fashion properly characteristic of this sequence of plays.

The York plays in this delightful series, probably of the middle period, are altogether more natural, detailed, and realistic than the Wakefield, though the Joseph of the latter has an interest of his own because he is so decidedly "down on his luck." In spirit, style, and verse, there is indeed a radical difference between the York treatment of this romance and the treatment accorded to their distinctive themes by the later York realist and the Wakefield Master. The work of the former, as we have seen, is in general characterised by an ability in plot-construction, a grasp of dramatic situation, and a tendency to emphasise idiosyncrasy and manners, though with somewhat more of grimness than of sympathy. The Wakefield Master not only refines upon the raw material, but transmutes it to something new in the alembic of his humour; he subordinates manners to satire, or to the comic of the situation, but he indulges rarely or not at all in tenderness. With the exception of two stanzas the Wakefield Virgin Plays owe nothing to him. The *Annunciation*, the *Flight*, and the *Play of the Doctors* show, more or less, the influence of York. The *Salutation*, however, opens with an original and charming domestic scene, where the cousins, Mary and Elizabeth, inquire after mutual friends and interests. The tone is as modern and as suitable to its dramatic function as a modern poet could achieve.

The romance of the betrothal of Mary and Joseph as told by the latter in the Wakefield *Annunciation* is not very dramatic, but it contains one pre-Raphaelite stanza:

> When I all thus had wed hir thare,
> We and my madyns home can fare,
> . That kyngys doghters were;
> All wroght thay sylk to fynd them on,
> Marie wroght purpyll, the oder none
> Bot othere colers sere,

which, although a paraphrase (as Mr. Pollard has shown) of verses in the apocryphal gospel of Mary,[1] and the Protevangel of St. James,[2] indicates both the poetic taste and the diction of the composer; for the "Kynges doghters," the "sylk to fynd them on," the "wroght," and that exquisite touch of the "othere colers *sere*," are of his invention. That part of the *Purification* written in the same stanza, where the bells of the Temple ring themselves at the approach of Mary and the Child, contains even more of simple wonder than the corresponding portions of the York. These plays have been assigned by Mr. Pollard to the original didactic stage of the cycle; but I am of opinion that the portions in the six-line metrical romance form were additions, at an early period to be sure, to the naïve basis in couplets.

It is with *Joseph's Trouble about Mary*, in the York cycle, that we reach the first genuine effort at a romantic handling of the theme. This play, though its introduction of Mary's attendant maids is probably of later insertion, displays many of the characteristics of a little comedy: the shifting moods of Joseph, Mary's patient iteration of the paternity of the Child, the skilful sequence of the plot. Significant above all are the char-

[1] vi, 7. [2] ix, 1–4, 6, 8, 18.

The Meeting of the Magi and Herod, the Massacre of the Innocents, and the Flight into Egypt
From "L'Apocalypse en français"

acter of the Virgin and her vindication. In the Wakefield play she is somewhat curt in her replies; here she is the *ewigweibliche*, worthy of adoration, winsome, mild. She is the first romantic woman in English drama, and the series of plays in which she figures is the forerunner of the modern comedy of love, — the drama of the maiden ideal victorious, and of woman adored. The devotion of the York Joseph to Mary and the Child is brought to its climax in an idyllic drama, *The Journey to Bethlehem*, and is developed with happy iteration in the *Flight* and the *Christ in the Temple.*

The intense interest taken by our ancestors in this story of eternal youth and love is evidenced by the fact that, of the York cycle, one-fifth centres about it; of the Chester, one-fourth; of the Wakefield, almost a third; of the N-Town, a third. Of the thirteen N-Town plays which refer to it, all but one introduce the figure of the Virgin, and in eight she is the central character. Now, metrical and other tests show that, while five of these (XII, XIII, XIV, XVIII, XIX) were originally among the earliest in the cycle, they are, in their present form, probably revisions of a later date than the corresponding plays of other cycles; also, that the remaining three (IX, X, XI) were first written about the time of these revisions. The charm of the Virgin has therefore prospered, and in the N-Town plays it bursts into full flower. In spite of their didactic bent, they enhance the interest of the dramatic by the infusion of romantic legend: as of the cherry tree bowing its fruit to the Virgin's hand; and by allegory, as of the maidens five that circle Mary. This ideal woman, the gracious child of long childless parents, the daughter vowed

In clennes to lyven in Godys service,

the maiden wife and virgin mother, what figure more fit to refine the manners and the art of an age still rude? And then what variety of plot revolves about her, — the comic reluctance of the aged bridegroom, his surprise over the blossoming rod of his destiny, his apprehension of a hen-pecked future,

> Xuld I now in age begynne to dote?
> If I her chyde she wold clowte my cote,
> Blere myn ey and pyke out a mote, —

his hearty wrong response during the wedding ceremony — the simple devotion of her damsels, the benediction of the bishop, the solicitude of the parents, the hiring of the "lytyl praty house," and the sudden departure of the newwed husband for a far "countré" — such touches, customary and immediate, must have made the *Betrothment* a most acceptable drama of the sentimental-comic kind. In sequence with this the *Return of Joseph* and the *Trial* constitute a trilogy, the prominence of which in the history of romantic comedy must not be underrated. The *Trial of Joseph and Mary* opens humorously, with a summoning to court of people by their English nicknames. This passage is evidently a somewhat later addition to a play which is otherwise significant. On the one hand the pageant is an early representative of romantic comedy, on the other of the scandal or manners school which was later to be developed with gusto and ungodly grace by the dramatists of the Restoration, and ultimately to be refined by Sheridan. For the elements of scandal it is necessary only to refer to the career of the apostles of detraction, — ensnared in the gins which they had set for others. For the element of the romantic no finer example of that early date can be found than the success-

ful refutation of the attack upon the honour of the Virgin. From the point of view of plot, as well, the play is justly to be regarded as one of the most important of cyclic contributions to early comedy. Indeed, the Joseph and Mary plays, as a whole, form an excellent transition from the study of realism to that of the romance of early comedy, and in their appeal to the sentiments of sexual chivalry, of wonder and admiration, the N-Town group of plays, and, to some extent, the corresponding York plays, make a decided advance upon other cycles.

I think that this aspect of the Nativity plays has not been hitherto duly emphasised. It is to be noted that the hero or heroine of them is always triumphant, that the best opportunity is offered for light-hearted fun, an opportunity which is generally availed of, and that the English drama is enriched in them by the virgin ideal, without which comedy would have remained farcical, fleshly, or heartless. It is largely by virtue of this ideal that the romantic comedy of Greene and Shakespeare runs with a ruddier blood and beats with a quicker pulse and healthier actuality and nobler spirit than the satire of Aristophanes or the smut of Wycherley. Comedy is not of the head alone nor of the belly. She is no Phœnician Ashtoreth, nor Aphrodite Pandemos, nor French Lubricity; nor is she any pallid Artemis, or lightning-born Athene, purposive, unfeeling, and serene. *Thalia Urania* is wit and winsomeness; sanity, romance, and tenderness,—in one: the light and love of a life found "more amusing than we thought."

CHAPTER XIV

THE ELEMENTS OF PATHOS AND SUBLIMITY

I SAID "romance and tenderness"; for pathos in the drama makes illusion real and calls the careless listener to account. And, though the most serious of these scriptural dramas is comedy in the sense divine, because triumphant in the outcome, it still is kind "with touches of things common" and "droppings of warm tears." Even in early pageants such as the Brome play of *Abraham and Isaac*, its derivative of Chester, and its analogues of other cycles, true pathos obtains. In the pageants of the middle and later periods, the tender phases of the Christ-story are steadily developed. But always the Virgin remains the lode-star of emotion. Few more tenderly natural scenes can be adduced than that in the Coventry guild play where the "Chyld waxeth cold"; or that in the York *Flight into Egypt* where Mary weeps and Joseph to "ese her arme" takes the "dere sone so swete." Again and again in the crucifixion and resurrection plays, the central figure is the Virgin. Jesus only too frequently presents a theological aspect; Mary, never. In the N-Town *Crucifixion*, when Jesus, in the greater business he was about, is apparently unmindful of her, the matchless motherhood asserts itself in pathos so dramatic that I wonder how historians have so long ignored it:

O my sone, my sone, my derlyng dere!
What have I defendyd [offended] thee?
Thou hast spoke to alle tho that ben here,
And not o word thou spekyst to me!

To the Jewys thou art ful kinde,
Thou hast forgeve al her mysdede;
And the thef thou hast in minde,
For onys askyng mercy heven is his mede.

A! my sovereyn Lord, why wilt thou not speke
To me that am thi modyr, in peyn for thi wrong?
A! heart! heart! why whylt thou not breke?
That I were out of this sorwe so stronge!

The reply of the Son is disappointingly clerical; but the situation is saved dramatically by that twin-mother with Mary of Christian romance — the Magdalene. "Ah, good lady," she cries, "why do ye thus, the pain that my Lord Jesus sees in you, it but paineth him the more." The York crucifixion plays are likewise sometimes mellowed by pathos; but the poet is generally paying too much attention to his alliterations to bestow a human sympathy upon the Mother of Christ. To her

Allas! for my swete sonne I saie,
That doulfully to dede thus is dight;
Allas! for full lovely thou laye
In my wombe, this worthely wight, . . .

the Jesus of York replies with words in which the scriptural severity becomes brutal:

Thou woman, do way of thy wepyng,
For me may thou no thyng amende;
My fadirs wille to be wirkynge,
For mankynde my body I bende.

The Wakefield *Processio Crucis*, on the other hand, (though it has from its fourth to its forty-eighth stanza

followed the dramatic manner and occasionally the language of the York *Crucifixio* and *Mortificacio*), leaves the style of York immeasurably behind, just as soon as the Virgin makes her moan — her *planctus*. "Alas, my lam so mylde," she weeps:

Why will thou fare me fro
Emang thise wulfès wylde that wyrke on thee this wo?
Fro shame who may thee shelde? For freyndys has thou fo!
Alas, my comly childe, why will thou fare me fro?
Madyns, make youre mone
And wepe, ye wyfès, everichon,
With me, most wrich, in wone,
The childe that borne was best!
My harte is styf as stone that for no bayll will brest.

This is poetry, the note inevitable: "Why wilt thou fare me fro?" —

My life how shall I lede
When fro me gone is he that is my hede
In hy?
My death *now* comen it is: my dere Son have mercy! —

The futile cry of the heart that, aching, cannot burst. Then answers the Son with tenderness infinite and that human tone:

My moder mylde, thou chaunge thi chere!
Cease of thi sorow and sighing sere,
It syttys unto my hart full sare;
The sorow is sharp I suffer here,
Bot doyll thou drees,[1] *my moder dere,*
Me marters mekill mare.
Thus will my fader I fare
To lowse mankynde of bandys:
His son will he not spare
To lowse that bon was ere[2]
Full fast in feyndys handys.

[1] The pain thou bearest. [2] To loose those that were bound.

There were, indeed, poets in England other than Chaucer and Langland, long before Spenser, Marlowe, and Shakespeare. *Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona multi.*

That the development of the cycles as a popular spectacle demanded a departure from that which was exclusively religious, didactic, and conventional in their inception, must again be emphasised. The craft-plays are a "sport" sprung from a serious stock. And on that account those qualities — of pathos, sublimity, and tragic awe — which characterise the miracles as liturgical, are not the *differentiæ* by which the progress of the offshoot as drama should be measured. In the crude the serious qualities are as vital as in the refined. Art has added little to their emotional sincerity. The pathetic, for instance, which in the later plays of the great cycles has attained that impressiveness of which we have taken note, was also significant though naïve in the thirteenth-century *Harrowing of Hell*, the Brome *Sacrifice of Isaac*, and the early versions of the *Massacre of the Innocents*. It is present in the liturgical laments of the Maries at the Tomb, and it rises to its climax in the Latin *planctus* of the Virgin before the Cross. From this point of view these efforts, early as they were, are not markedly inferior to their dramatic successors of the N-Town and Wakefield cycles, or to the *Road to Calvary* of the Shearmen's play at York. But though it is more difficult to trace an historical advance in the handling of the serious emotions than in that of the commoner sort, it is no less instructive to note their contribution to the æsthetic value of the miracle plays.

From the consideration of the pathetic we pass most readily to that of its converse, the sublime. This obtains to some extent in the earlier spectacles of

Abraham's obedience and Christ's nativity, but most, of course, in the dramas of the Passion, whether early or late. In the majestic silence of the Saviour during the trials before Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod, it speaks. In the superhuman patience of the Ascent to Calvary, and of the agony upon the Cross, it lives.

The words of Jesus,

> Ye daughters of Jerusalem
> I bid you weep no more for me,

and those beginning

> I pray you people that pass me by —

which recur in one form or another in various cycles appeal to me as among the finest specimens of mingled pathos and sublimity in mediæval literature. The Wakefield monologue of Christ after his resurrection (of the affiliation of which with the Chester, N-Town, and other versions I shall speak later) is the height of moral grandeur: "Earthly man that I have wrought, Remember what was done for thee" —

> Clean have I made thee sinful man,
> With woe and wandreth[1] I thee wan;[2]
> From heart and side the blood out-ran
> Such was my pyne —[3]
> Thou must me love that thus gave than[4]
> My life for thine; . . .

and that other stanza, too, whose tone is the *vox humana* of some great organ,

> For I am very prince of peace,
> And sinnës sere[5] I may release,

[1] misfortune. [2] won. [3] pain. [4] then. [5] many.

And whoso will of sinnës cease
And mercy cry, —
I grant them here a measse[1]
In bread, mine own body.

For the solemnity which is born of the thought of death, I venture to say that few modern elegies can stand comparison with one embedded in the Wakefield *Lazarus*, and there forgotten:

Ilk one in such array, with death he shall be dight,
And closèd cold in clay, whether he be king or knight.

What more dignified, and stern yet tender, than the concluding strain:

Amend thee, man, whiles yet thou may,
Let never no mirth fordo thy mind;
Thinke thou on the dreadful day
When God shall demë [judge of] all mankind.
Think thou farest as doth the wind;
This world is waste and will away:
Man, have this in thy mind,
And amend thee whiles thou may.

Amend thee, man, whiles thou art here,
Against thou go another gait;
When thou art dead and laid on bier,
Wit thou well thou be'st too late; —
For if all the good thou ever gat
Were dealt for thee after thy day,
In heaven it would not mend thy state, —
Therefore amend thee whiles thou may!

If thou be right royàl in rent,
As is the steed standing in stall,
Know in thy heart and take intent
That they are Goddës goodës all.

[1] meal.

He might have made thee poor and small
As one that begs from day to day;
Wit thou well, account thou shall, —
Therefore amend thee whiles thou may![1]

As to the tragic, it is present, to be sure, in the Cornish Pharaoh, David and Bethsabe, and Maximilla; in the Chester *Antichrist*, the Wakefield *Judicium*, the N-Town and the York *Massacre of the Innocents;* and in the plays of the Passion. But while the liturgical interest of the Passion plays was serious, or even tragic, the tragedy, as I have insisted, was always relieved by the foreknowledge of the Resurrection. And in other cases, when the subjects were such as might lend themselves naturally to tragic treatment, — the fury and death of Herod, for instance, the remorse and hanging of Judas, the downfall of Antichrist, and the retribution of Cain, there is rather a presentation of horror than of tragedy, for the suffering of the heroes is so contrived as to awaken in the beholder neither the sympathy nor the admiration essential to the proper enjoyment of tragic art.

[1] I have but slightly modernised the text.

CHAPTER XV

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LATER MIRACLES

Also closely connected with the interest in the romantic, and tending to the same idealisation of fact, is interest in the allegorical. One cannot but notice the growing frequency with which abstractions are introduced as characters in the later N-Town plays: *Contemplacio*, *Mors*, *Veritas*, *Misericordia*, *Justicia*, *Pax*.[1] The influence of epical allegory is beginning to tell; but we must not, therefore, conclude that the miracles of N-Town were the first or only adaptation of the allegorical dramatic form. Chaucer had already reduced allegory to dialogue; and moralities like the *Castle of Perseverance*, written as early as 1400, and abounding in abstract characters derived both from epical allegory and experience, were already pursuing their distinct and independent course toward a comedy of humours and manners even before the miracle play had begun to avail itself of the stock-in-trade abstractions of religious ceremony and thought.[2]

[1] For a list of these instances, see Hohlfeld, *die Kollektivmisterien*, *Anglia*, XI, 279. I doubt whether the twelve abstractions listed at the beginning of *Lud. Cov.*, XL, are dramatic characters. For these four lines make a stanza which was probably assigned for delivery, word by word, to the several apostles; just as the next stanza was distributed in the same order, but by lines.

[2] See Ebert, *Jahrb. f. rom. u. engl. Lit.*, I, 166–7; *Die engl. Mysterien*; and chapter xxi, below.

The *Ludus Coventriæ* "Daughters of God," are merely signs of the literary times, adaptation of scriptural imagery; not a new dramatic invention nor of uncommon historical significance.

A period sufficiently mature to enjoy symbol and satire could not but develop still another dramatic possibility, the mock ideal. This is furnished by situations in which Pride rides for a fall or Cunning is caught in his own snare. The yeomen and craftsmen of Plantagenet England could not always with safety vent their wrath upon the oppressor and the extortionate, but upon the Pharaohs, Balaaks, and Herods of the *Corpus Christi* they could. The louder the bluster of the local bully, the deeper was he drowned, or downed, and damned by the local playwright. When Judas hanged himself, many a red-headed usurer of the neighbourhood was remembered with imprecations not loud but deep, and consigned by the audience to perdition with him; and long tediums of restrictive conscience were doubtless relieved by a flout at the devil of the play. This, indeed, was the drama of vicarious reprisals, which, administering the physic of contempt for tyrants, worked a salutary elimination, or catharsis, of timidity in the vulgar, a *sursum corda* of self-gratulation, burgher independence, and good cheer. To get the better of the devil was ever a grim delight, even of and in one's self; but in those days there was also the satisfaction of assisting at the discomfiture of Judases, Pharaohs, and Antichrists of one's own acquaintance, into whom Sathanas long ago had crept. For no doubt, as on the Continent, odious *dramatis personæ* were presented in the likeness of even more odious contemporaries.

In the latest additions to the great cycles, and in other miracles of a late date of composition, the dramatic

element most zealously developed is that of surprise. The minor biblical miracles, such as the healing of Malchus, are availed of, the marvels of the Resurrection are supplemented, apocryphal and legendary wonderments are introduced: the obeisance of the banners to the Lord Jesus, the appearance of Our Lady to St. Thomas, the mystic concomitants of her death, assumption, and coronation, the mediæval juggleries of the Antichrist, and many other necromantic delights. It is, however, in the Newcastle *Shipwrights' Play* and the Digby series, both of the fifteenth century, that the climax of sensation is attained. The former presents us with dramatic woman and dramatic devil in alliance, gaining, *pari passu*, in complexity of motive and unexpectedness of action. The Noe's wife, here, surpasses her prototypes: she is positively melodramatic. Under the devil's influence she wanders from her traditional rôle so far as to give a sleeping potion to her unsuspicious husband. And the devil is no longer the mythical worm, or the shadow of a dream, with which Eve and Percula were acquainted: he is possessed of human characteristics, is a more fascinating creature, more natural, and of course more amenable to feminine importunity.

The Digby play of the *Kyllynge of the Children of Israel*, though composed, like others included in the same collection, as late as the end of the fifteenth century, improves in only one particular upon the dramatic quality of the miracles which had earlier dealt with that subject. It develops into action the possibilities of burlesque already suggested by the Chester play. There the Hebrew mothers threaten to beat Herod's soldiers with their distaffs; here one boastful soldier, Watkyn, gets a sound drubbing. The *Conversion of Saint Paul*,

on the other hand, and the *Mary Magdalene*, betray in many ways their comparative modernity. They not only fuse the leading characteristics of saints' play and scriptural miracle, but absorb from the contemporary "moral" as well, certain of its distinctive ingredients. To the biblical narrative and the devils of a miracle play the *St. Paul* adds the conflict between good and evil for the possession of a human soul which is the *raison d'être* of the "moral." The conflict is not, indeed, conducted, as in the moral play, between concrete abstractions, virtues and vices, but directly between God and the Devil. Still, the Seven Deadly Sins, from whom the dramatic Vice of the "moral" was derived, are effectively deployed by word of mouth, both of the devil Belial and of Saul; and the equally abstract Power of Grace takes visible form in the figure of the Holy Ghost and so descends upon the new-made saint. Somewhat similarly the *Mary Magdalene* combines the material of mediæval saint-story with incidents and characters drawn from scriptural tradition and with still others borrowed from the custom of the moral play. Side by side with Mary's father Cyrus, and with the King and Queen of Marcylle, the Marcylle Shipman, and Mary in the Wilderness, — all out of popular legend, — proceed Lazarus and Jesus, Simon the Leper, Herod, Pilate and the devils as from the Bible and the biblical miracle play; while in and out of the one and fifty scenes which constitute the two parts of the drama step abstractions, the Angel of Good and the Angel of Evil, the mortal sins — Pryde and Covetyse, retainers of the King of the World; Slowth, Gloteny and Lechery, retainers of the King of the Flesh; Wrath and Envy, retainers of the Prince of Devils, Satan himself.

No less novel are these plays in devices productive of sensational effect, — in the former, for instance, the comic realism of the encounter between Saul's servant and the ostler; the richly caparisoned knights riding to bind the Christians and bear them to Jerusalem; the appearance of the Lord with great tempest, and Saul struck blind by lightning; Belial in the fiery parts infernal, Mercury his messenger, and other devils who shall "rore and crye"; music and dancing. Even more spectacular the career of the Magdalene: not only in the pomp, already familiar, of scriptural potentates, and the undying wonders of Lazarus revived and of Hell harrowed, but in the more alluring presentation of less hackneyed scenes, — Lechery and Mary, Mary and her gallant, Mary in her arbour, the pagan sacrifice and ritual in the Temple of Marcylle, Mary's mission to the heathen king and queen, the angels feeding Mary and taking her to the king's chamber, the miraculous childbirth and the death of the queen, the journey by sea of the corpse and the babe, the conversion of the king and his baptism by St. Peter, the restoration of the queen to life, Mary and the hermit and the shriving in the desert, and finally the assumption of the Magdalene. As in the St. Paul, here also are interwoven with the heroic-romantic, episodes of comic realism, — the mock-mass of Mahound, the amusing controversy of the pagan presbyter and his irreverent acolyte, the storm by sea, the bustle of the mariners, the captain shouting for his dinner, and the sea-cook so sick with a cramp that he can't get it ready.

The spectators may, of course, have been familiar with the legend of the Magdalene as presented by Voragine and Caxton, or even with some of its sources in the apocryphal New Testament; but whatever abatement

of surprise may have resulted on that account would be more than compensated by interest in the development of the personality of the heroine herself. This is the distinctive contribution of the play to the equipment of English drama: the portrayal of the struggle by which an erring soul gradually achieves salvation, — the growth of character from within; the romance of the fallen woman who raises not only herself but others; the flowering of the sinner into the saint.

To the parts played by the Devil and the Deadly Sins in the miracle of *St. Paul* we have referred above; the *Magdalene* is rich in material for the study of these characters in a critical period of their dramatic career. The Devil here, if less ridiculous, is no less sensational than in the former play; the Deadly Sins, which in the former were terrors of rhetorical imagery, here are present in the flesh, playing a concrete dramatic rôle. Still further, from the rank and file of them two emerge — the Lady Lechery and the gallant Curiosity — as social personalities, no longer mere shadows of their master-devils, but walking embodiments of man's own depravity, Vices full-grown, both human and dramatic. The Devil of the earlier miracle plays was a theological character, a fallen archangel, an incarnate spirit inimical to all mankind because of a grudge against the Maker of all. Originally a serious character, he degenerated into a "bogey" or a buffoon only at the instance of the improvising actor; and as the latter he enters such literature as is extant only with the author of these Digby plays. So, too, with the Digby plays we find the Vice of the dramatic moral and of contemporary Fool-literature intruding upon the borders of the miracle. He is not a theological character, has no long Hebrew or Babylonian gene-

alogy. He is allegorical, — typifying the moral frailty of man or woman. Not of mankind in the lump, though he is willing to oblige; but of one individual at a time, whose colours he consistently parades. Proceeding from the concept of the Deadly Sins, at first emphasising the characteristics of one, ultimately focussing all into one, he dramatises the evil that springs from within. Though at first directed, as in the Digby *Magdalene* and early moral plays, by the theological Devil, God's enemy, who assails mankind with temptations from without, the Vice is the younger contemporary of the Devil rather than his offspring or agent. As he acquires personality, he assumes characteristics and functions unknown to the Devil, scriptural or dramatic. These functions were gradually assimilated with those of mischief-maker, jester, and counterfeit crank.[1] The story of this assimilation concerns, however, not the history of the religious play, but that of the interlude — moral, educational, witty, or satirical — which prepared the way for, and was also contemporary with, the secular drama of the early Elizabethans.

In the last six chapters I have tried to show how the English cycles developed in dramatic quality. This development is but an index to the parallel growth of English culture. I therefore repeat what, in these chapters, I have frequently emphasised: that in the earlier plays of our forefathers the mirth, the proverbial philosophy, the social aims, the æsthetic and religious ideals of the middle ages still live for us. I would urge upon literary investigators, as of incalculable advantage to historical and social, as well as exclusively philological, science, a more minute and sympathetic study of these monuments

[1] See *Rep. Engl. Com.*, xlvi–liv, for a fuller treatment of the subject.

than has been hitherto undertaken. The miracle plays are humanities that, originating long before the Conquest, dominated the imagination of native England for more than five hundred years, and helped to form the national taste for a fiction, allegory, epic, and satire, more artistic, to be sure, but still traditional and of scriptural tang, and for a drama higher and broader, both classical and romantic, but ever racy, and of the inherited stock and soil. They were humanities in the yellow leaf, but still lingering on the tree, when Shakespeare and Ben Jonson put forth blossom, and when Peele and Lyly, Marlowe and Greene, had already passed from flower to fruitage.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MYSTERIES IN FRANCE

In France, as Petit de Julleville has shown, the religious plays were until the fifteenth century known as *ludi*, *repræsentationes*, *historiæ repræsentandæ*. "Mystère" is used for the first time in 1402 in a letter of Charles VI licensing the *Confrères de la Passion* of Paris to present the "misterre de la Passion, et d'autres misterres." Up to 1450 the term applies commonly to *tableaux vivants* and pageants for royal entries. Only after that date are dramatic texts called "mysteries," and even then the term is extended to include plays of no religious content whatever, as, for instance, the *Mystère du Siège d'Orleans*. "Mysterium" (or "mystery") and "ministerium" ("metier" or "office") were confounded in the usage of the middle ages; and it is uncertain whether the dramatic nomenclature derives originally from the act or *ministerium* of public worship and industrial function, or from the sacred nature of the "mystery" symbolised in the elevation of the Host at the critical moment of the Mass.

Of the earlier religious plays, such as the twelfth-century *Adam*, and the thirteenth-century *St. Nicholas*, I have already spoken. The collective mysteries fall into three cycles: that of the Old Testament, that of the New Testament, and that of the Apostles and the later saints.

The first of these, *le Mystère du Viel Testament*, consists of 44,325 verses. It was compiled from pieces written by many authors, which had been accumulating up to and during the fifteenth century, and was printed by Pierre le Dru about the year 1500. It was played entire by the *Confrères de la Passion* at the Hôtel de Flandres in 1542; and it took twenty consecutive performances to exhaust the material. The price of admission was two *sous;* that of a box for the season, thirty *écus*. It covers several mysteries which dramatised the sacred history of the world to the reign of Solomon, and also separate plays of Job, Tobias, Susanna and Daniel, Judith and Esther.

The *Nouveau Testament* is preserved in seven distinct versions, called *Passions*, the best known of which, comprising 34,574 verses, was written by Arnoul Greban, about 1450. In each of these versions the whole life of Christ is presented; but several other plays present portions of the life, — the Nativity, the Passion, properly so called, and the Resurrection. Of these special mysteries the most celebrated is the *Passion* of Jean Michel, which elaborated that particular portion of the cycle of Greban. It was written about the end of the fifteenth century, and surpasses in occasional moments of sublimity all others of its kind.

The third series of plays comprises the *Actes des Apôtres* by Arnoul Greban and his brother Simon, and some forty mysteries of separate saints composed by other authors. The *Apôtres* in length staggers the imagination. It has 61,968 lines. When it was played at Bourges in 1536, it ran through forty consecutive days; and when at Paris in 1545, it occupied the Sundays for seven months. In both cities it was witnessed by crowds of all ranks and classes.

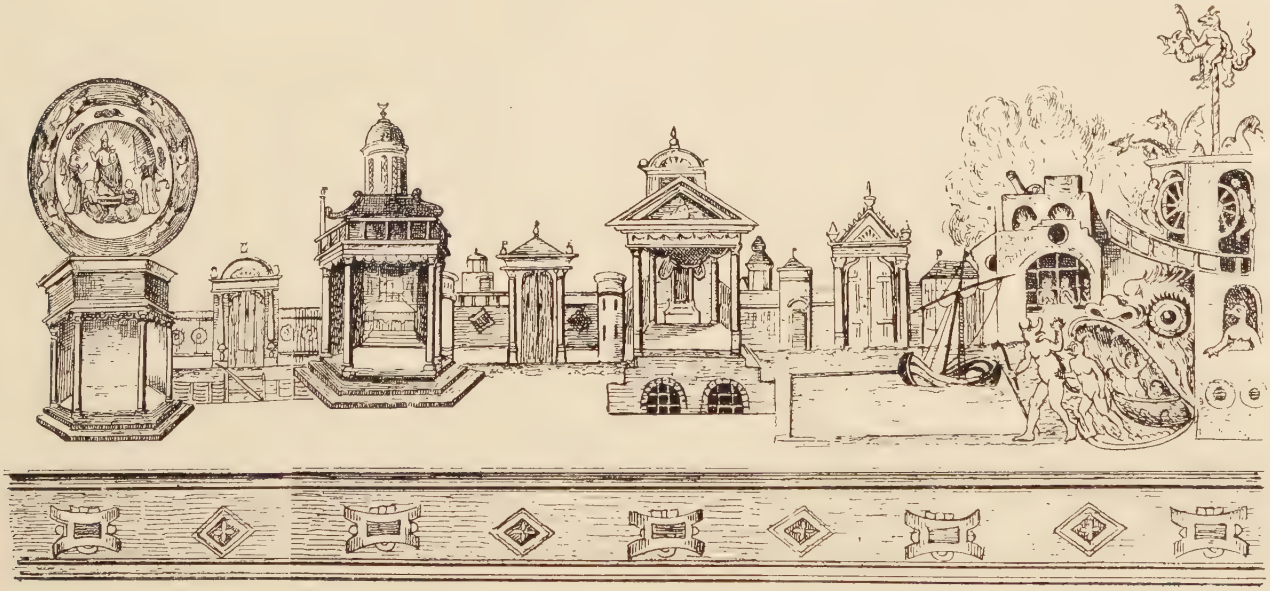
Petit de Julleville,[1] from whom these facts are drawn, gives us also a description of the manner of performance at Valenciennes. Here, in 1547, the *Passion* was played, and from a painting at the beginning of the manuscript of the mystery one discovers the arrangement of the stage. It was of enormous size and provided with *lieux*, or stationary scenery; a pavilion with columns above, which was Paradise, where God was enthroned and surrounded by the four Virtues, — Justice, Peace, Wisdom, Mercy; a wall with a gate, figuring Nazareth; a second pavilion enclosing an altar and the ark of the covenant, — the Temple; another wall with gate, tower, and house, — Jerusalem; and so on: the Palace, House of Bishops, Golden Gate, the Lake of Tiberias, Hell and Limbo. These, however, were but a few of the many structures required for the mystery. The performers were not, as in England, exclusively of the various trades or crafts of these provincial towns, but of all degrees, — nobles, the lower clergy, magistrates, lawyers, as well as minor townsfolk. Even girls and little children occasionally took part. At Metz the character of St. Catherine was so well acted by a glazier's daughter, who not only had the 2300 lines on the tip of her tongue, but made people weep with the pathos of her utterance, that she was out of hand married by a rich nobleman, Henri de Latour, "who fell in love with her because of the great delight he took in her performance." The chronicles abound with testimony to the enthusiasm of the audiences and the devotion of the actors. The realism with which the latter played is illustrated by the fact that in the Passion play of Metz, in 1437, both the

[1] *Hist. de la langue et de la litt. Franç.*, II, 405; *Le Théâtre en France*, pp. 1-35.

vicar who was crucified as Christ, and the chaplain who hanged himself for Judas, came so near dying that they had to be taken down and rubbed with restoratives.

In Paris, from 1402, the sacred plays were under the complete control of the association of bourgeois and craftsmen mentioned above as the *Confrérie de la Passion*. To them may be accredited the establishment of the first permanent theatre; for they played within doors and in a fixed place, first l'Hôpital de la Trinité, then l'Hôtel de Flandres, and finally l'Hôtel de Bourgogne, from their inception until the close of the sixteenth century. During that century numerous other "mysteries" were composed, many of them on purely secular themes, like Gringoire's *Mystère de Saint Louis*. Of the various kinds some twenty specimens still exist.

The French mysteries aim more deliberately at entertainment than their analogues of England. Nothing, perhaps, illustrates this difference more conclusively than a review of the subjects included in the French cycle of the Old Testament, but not in any of the English. Some cater to the vulgar with situations that are prurient, salacious, and openly obscene; of such are the wooing of the daughters of men, the Cainites, by the Sethite sons of God, the exposure of Noah in his drunkenness, Pharaoh's attempt upon Sarah and his consequent malady, the lusting of the Sodomites, Leah's deception of Jacob, the rape of Dinah, the intrigue of Reuben and Billah, — with little Joseph in the rôle of spy and informer, — Joseph and Potiphar's wife, the amours of David and Bethsabe beside the details of which the Cornish play shrinks into virtuous crudity, Ammon's incestuous passion, and the conspiracy of the elders against Susanna.



The Passion Play at Valenciennes in 1547
From "A History of Theatrical Art"

Other plays of the *Viel Testament* emphasise the marvels of legend and scripture. The mission of Seth was included, as we have seen, in the cycle of Cornwall, but in no other British collection. In the French it is more gorgeously dramatised, and with parallel scenes of the heavenly and the earthly paradise, — the process divine as well as human. Wonders — such as the translation of Enoch, Esau's vision of the three "arbres de la croix et les oyseaulx qui les adorent," the metamorphosis of Lot's wife, the conjurations of the Witch of Endor, and the apparition of Samuel, — are to be found in none of the cycles of Britain. Nor the sensational sequel of the murder of Abel in the wanderings and bestial death of Cain; nor the romance of Samson and Delilah, nor the adventures of David's youth — the contest with Goliath, the friendship with Jonathan, the harping before Saul, the winning of Michal, and the flight from Saul's jealous hatred.

The English cycles touch, with a pathos as tender as that of their French contemporary, upon the sacrifice of Isaac and the griefs of the Blessed Virgin, but none of them seizes such possibilities as are presented by the death of Saul and the untimely end of Absalom. In the French cycle, few scenes are more delicately contrived than David's lament over Saul and Jonathan, and his futile agony for the rebellious, beautiful son, whom Joab has smitten and slain:

Mon filz Absalon,
  Absalon, mon filz!
Las! perdu t'avon,
Mon filzAbsalon!
Et fault que soyon
  En grief dueil confis,

Mon filz Absalon,
Absalon, mon filz.

In the play *De Abraham et de ses enfants*, the pathos of which I have spoken is enhanced by a realism of detail, a pastoral atmosphere and environment unapproached by the dramatists of England. I do not say that the thrilling simplicity of the Brome play is surpassed by the art of the French, but merely that the natural possibilities are elaborated by the French playwright with a skill, which even if somewhat sophisticated, imparts a charm both exquisite and peculiar.

The play opens with a pretty domestic scene in which Abraham and Sarah express their gratitude to God for the child of their old age and lesson the little Isaac in his duty to the Divine. We next are admitted to the celestial council, where, after long deliberation of God, Justice, and Mercy, the trial of Abraham's righteousness is decreed. Restored then to the humble affairs of earth, we hear the patriarch summoning Ishmael and Eliezer to lead the sheep to pasture, and Ishmael whistling the dogs to their work,—"Come, Clabault, Tourin, Patault, Veloux, Satin, out with us, out for the day." Off they run; and little Isaac, left behind, turns to his mother:

Mother Sarah, give me please
Leave to follow after these.

Sarah. Yes, my child, if your father will;
His word is ever my word still.

Isaac. Father, let me hasten away
Whither the shepherds have gone to-day,
Out with the sheep, — the spot I know.

Abraham. Then, my boy, God bless you, go.
I 'll mount my donkey and follow anon
There where you and the rest are gone.

Isaac. So, here goes Isaac; away, away!
[*Isaac va aux champs.*

Eliezer. Ishmael!
Ishmael. What is it; what do you say?
Eliezer. Lo, Isaac afar; he comes I see
To be with us.
Ishmael. Then let us three
Contrive some sport.
Eliezer. Well said. Devise
Which is the best. With you it lies.
[*Isaac arrives.*
Isaac. God bless you, shepherds!
Ishmael. The same to you,
Isaac!
Isaac. *Hst*, fellows, now tell me true,
What kind of a game do you think we 'll play
To while the time?
Ishmael. Chuck-farthing, I say.
Isaac. Oh, no, no! At *tullerettes.*
Eliezer. Not by a long shot. Tell you, let 's
Have a good turn at *picque en Romme;*
That 's the best fun.
Ishmael. Here 's for it; come!

We leave them playing and return to Abraham, who, unwontedly taken with sleep, tells Sarah that he 'll have a nap in the garden. Let her, meanwhile, see that the donkey has his oats. Abraham, pillowing comfortably his head upon a stone, composes himself for slumber; — while we are transported once more to the Council in Paradise. God, Justice, and Mercy determine to announce by Seraphim the news of their sad decision to Abraham. With this angelic company we return. The patriarch receives the order with horror and submission. "Ah, Sarah," thinks he, "when you gave our sweet Isaac leave to play in the fields, how little you thought

what was about to befall." But he keeps to himself the doom; and mounting his donkey departs as with intent to offer the customary sacrifice. We return to Paradise to assist at still further argumentation concerning type and antitype, Isaac and the Atonement for mankind. Meanwhile Abraham, agonising and philosophising, rides. And out in the pastures the unwitting victim still sports with his playmates. At last, weary of games, *picque en Romme*, crusoe, and the rest, they are betaking themselves to song.[1] Says Isaac,

> Cependant, chantons ung petit
> Pour nous recreer. Voulez vous?

But Ishmael replies,

> Si j'avoye ma fleute a troys troux,
> Dont je m'esbas en mon lourdoys,
> Nonobstant que aye bien lourdz doitz,
> Je sonneroye une chanson,
> Ou vous danceriez tous au son,
> Et n'eussiez de dancer envie.

And Eliezer likewise opines that had he only his pet bagpipe, reed of oaten straw, or viol, no harp could please them more. Then Ishmael makes the best of things as they are, and unaccompanied sings,

> Il n'est tel plaisir
> Que estre à son desir
> Couché et gesir
> Parmy ses beaux champs,
> Fleurettes choisir,
> Jouer à loysir
> Sans nul desplaisir,
> Et passer le temps;

[1] I have availed myself of the variants as given in the *Mistère* as published for the Société des Anciens Textes Français.

and more of the meadows, and the songs of birds far sweeter than the tinkle of the merchant's gold. Eliezer, in turn, carols of care-free shepherds, and the snatch of sleep under the vine or the eglantine:

Puis quant l'un s'esveille
Pour faire la veille,
Ung aultre sommeille
  Et prent son repos;
L'ung tire l'oreille
À quelque bouteille
Soubz la verte treille
  Et boit à pleins potz.

So they continue till Abraham, arriving, calls them to the journey for the sacrifice ordered by the angel of the Lord.

What follows, interspersed as it is with further doctrinal proceedings in Paradise, is hardly less pathetic than the best of the English plays. It is certainly more imaginative and more skilfully versified. A triolet of father and son, as Isaac lies bound for the slaughter, sufficiently exemplifies the quality of the French treatment:

Abr. À Dieu, mon filz.
Isaac. À Dieu, mon père.
Bendé suys; de bref je mourray;
Plus ne voy la lumière clère.
Abr. À Dieu, mon filz.
Isaac. À Dieu, mon père.
Recommandés moy a ma mère;
Jamais je ne la reverray.
Abr. À Dieu, mon filz.
Isaac. À Dieu, mon père.
Bendé suys; de bref je mourray.

Delicate, but how different from the poignant simplicity of the Chester play and its congener, the Brome. Says the Isaac of the former:

Father, greete well my brethren yinge,
And praye my mother of her blessinge,
I come noe more under her wynge,
Fare well for ever and aye;
But, father, I crye you of mercye,
For all that ever I trespassed to thee,
Forgeven, father, that it maye be
Untell Domësdaie.

Still the three plays were evidently derived from some common original, — French or Anglo-Norman.

The pathos of the *Abraham* play is not more notable than the sublimity, realism, sometimes the buffoonery, of other of the French mysteries. The Passion plays, distinctively so-called, are noble in sentiment as well as style. The birth of Moses and his discovery by Pharaoh's daughter, a subject neglected by the English playwrights, is developed with a realism that is, to say the least, pretty; and the building of the Tower of Babel gives opportunity for a graphic illustration of the manners and conversation of mediæval craftsmen. As for buffoonery, no Englishman ever dreamed of exploiting the bigamous Lamech, the impious Ham, the daughters of Cain, the lecherous accusers of Susanna, the hordes of accessory demons, knaves, mendicants, and fools as they are exploited in the *Viel Testament.*

In characterisation, the French playwrights leave the English far behind — all but the Master of Wakefield at his best. The perilous femininity of Eve, the cunning of Rebecca, the cruelty of Judah, the innate humanity of Reuben, the provoking piety and self-conscious superiority of Joseph, the heroism of Judith, are conceptions of an art no longer fumbling or naïve. The characters, principal and secondary, are mirrored from the real world; they live the mediæval life in all its detail of pompous or

of "vulgar" manners; they indulge in the luxury of sincerity, and they speak, when appropriate, the simple and natural *patois* of the folk.

In inventive imagination and dramatic skill, — the difficult manipulation of extended plots, numerous personages and varied *tableaux*, of parallel scenes, of surprises and of critical moments, — the plays of *Bathsheba and David*, *Judith*, *Tobias*, and *Daniel* prophesy the technique if not the rhetoric of Corneille and Racine. One cannot shut his eyes to the disparity existent between English miracles and the Elizabethan drama. In France, between mystery and classical drama no such gulf was fixed. This is due to the earlier cultivation there of diversified poetic forms, to the fact that the French mysteries as we have them were collated and revised as late as the middle of the fifteenth century, and to the ultimate control of their representation by literary and dramatic societies possessed of the culture and influence that marked the famous *Confrérie de la Passion* of Paris.

I have more than once mentioned the easy versification of these plays. Elaborate forms also abound: triolets, rondels, ballades, and the chant royal with double refrain. If it were not for lack of space, some of these should be quoted. But I content myself reluctantly with mere reference to such as the ballades of Seth, Cain, and Pharaoh; the rondel of Esau, the triolet on the Death of Abel, and the chant royal of Judith and the Bethulians.

The sources of the French cycles are in general the same as those of the English; and the latter will be discussed in a later chapter. The Chester cycle, indeed, in its first five plays has directly borrowed from early versions of various French mysteries.[1]

[1] See Appendix A.

CHAPTER XVII

CURIOUS TRADITIONS IN THE CYCLES

The Angelic Hierarchy and the Fall of Lucifer

Certain of the miracle plays are especially interesting because they develop traditions that have but slight basis in scriptural narrative, or none at all, and still present them as material of common acceptance by the religious and literary consciousness of the time.

The Fall of Lucifer offered to our forefathers opportunity for a dramatic exordium unusual, mysterious, sublime, and spectacular in the extreme. All the English cycles avail themselves of it, but none with nicer respect for histrionic arrangement and detail than that of Chester.

God is on his throne: *Ego sum Alpha et Omega, primus et ultimus,*—

> It is my will it should be so.
> It is, it was, it shall be thus:
> I am great God, gracious
> Which never had beginning.

Wisdom, beauty, might of majesty are magnified in him who is the Trinity, "Never but one, And ever one in three." Now will he build, and here, a boundless Bliss:

> A heaven without ending;
> And cast a comely compass
> By comely creation —
> Nine orders of angels
> Be ever at once descending!

With the rushing of many wings and the gleam of white and gold, and solemn strains of music louder and louder growing, and a great burst of light, the new-created hosts of angels surround the throne, singing *Te deum laudamus, te dominum confitemur.*

There is a silence. And Lucifer begins:

> Lord, through thy might thou hast us wrought
> Nine orders here, that we may see
> Cherubin and seraphin, through thy Grace,
> Thrones and dominations in bliss to be,
> With principates, that order bright,
> And potestates in blissful light,
> Also virtutes through thy great might,
> Angel also archangelé.
> Nine orders now here be witterly,
> That thou hast madë here full right;
> In thy bliss full bright they be,
> And I the principal, Lord, here in thy sight.

The Almighty straightway admonishes Lucifer and Lucifer's other self, Lightborn, that they be lowly:

> Exalt you not too excellent
> Into high exaltation;
> Look that you tend righteously;
> For hence I will be wending.
> The world that is both void and vain,
> I form in the formatión
> With a dungëon of darkëness
> Which never shall have ending.

Thereupon the world has being, though still formless; and hell yawns black beneath. Angels and archangels praise their "Prince withouten peer," and the orders nine chant the *Dignus Dei.* The Creator then disposes the orders nine according to their degree. Lucifer he seats next unto himself, proclaiming him governor, but warn-

ing him, "Touch not my throne by none assent." And to all he says:

> Each one of you keep well his place, . . .
> For I will wend and take my trace,
> And see this bliss in every tower."

Once the splendour of Divinity is withdrawn Lucifer's superiority to his fellows is manifest:

> Aha that I am wondrous bright,
> Among you all shining full clear;
> Of all heaven I bear the light
> Though God himself, an he were here.
> All in this throne if that I were
> Then should I be as wise as he;
> What say you, angels, all that be here?
> Some comfort soon, now let me see.

From one order and another without regard to degree comes the remonstrance: from virtues, cherubim, dominations, principalities, seraphim, thrones, powers —

> We will not assent unto your pride . . .
> This pride will turn to great distress . . .
> Cast away all wicked pride.

But Lucifer is consumed with the brightness of his glory, and Lightborn his brother urges him on. "In faith, you shall sit on this throne; shall be wise as God himself:

> The brightness of your body clear
> Is brighter than God a thousand fold."

Again the holy angels plead—but Lucifer:

> Go hence . . .
> Above great God I will me guide,
> And see myself here as I ween;
> I am peerless and prince of pride,
> For God himself shines not so sheen.

He takes the awful seat:

Here will I sit now in his stead.

And Lightborn:

I am next of the same degree, . . .
All orders may assent to thee and me.

Dominations: Alas, why make you this great offence? . . .

Lucifer: I rede you all make reverence,
That am replete with heavenly grace.
Though God come, I will not hence,
But sit right here before his face.

God *enters*

Deus. Say, what array do you make here?
Who is your chief and principal?
I made thee angel and Lucifier,
And here thou wouldst be lord of all;
Therefore, I charge this order clear
Fast from this place look that you fall . . .
For your foul pride to hell you shall! —
[*Now Lucifer and Lightborn fall.*]

And in the abyss they lie, assailing one the other, no longer angels, but demons, bewailing their lot, knowing well that in hell-fire they shall abide "Till the day of doom, till beamës [trumpets] blow." But even so, one comfort has Lucifer:

Therefore I shall for his sake
Shew mankind great envy;
As soon as ever he can him make,
I shall send him to destroy!

God, nevertheless, will have his intent:

That I first thought, yet so will I . . .
A full fair image we have y-meant,
That the same seed shall multiply . . .

Man, accordingly, is created as a new or tenth order, to supply the place of the angels who had fallen.

Some idea of the variety and antiquity of the materials that constituted what one may call the literary consciousness of the middle ages may be obtained if one follow, even in a general way, the history of this tradition to its sources. Where, for instance, arose the conception of these orders nine or ten of angels, and of the sequence of their creation; whence the revolt and fall of Lucifer and of his cohorts; whence the attribution of his revolt to pride, and the story of man's creation as a substitute for the fallen host?

The History of the "Angelic Orders"

First, for the hierarchy of celestial hosts. This is given in the Chester play as of nine orders, — cherubim, seraphim, thrones, dominations, principalities, powers, virtues, angels, and archangels. In the first York play, too, though the names of the orders are not given, they are nine in number; and in the seventh play of the same cycle we are informed that of each of those nine orders the tenth part fell in Lucifer's revolt. In the first Wakefield play, however, a variant is introduced; for Lucifer says:

> X orders in heven were
> Of angels that had offyce sere;
> Of each order, in thare degree
> The X parte fell downe with me.

These four plays were composed during the last three quarters of the fourteenth century; and since the famous cyclic poem of sacred history, the *Cursor Mundi*, which was written as early as 1300, mentions both orders nine

and orders ten, it is not impossible that the miracles of Chester, York, and Wakefield derived their versions of the story from that poem. That they drew upon it for other material is well known. But we are not just now concerned with that question; we are not looking for the immediate, but the remote, source of the tradition. How old are these factors of the mediæval consciousness? Are they of ecclesiastical derivation; and if so, of what channels other than the canonical books of Holy Scripture?

The story may be traced in both its versions through the literature and theology of the middle and dark ages back to the fourth century, where we find Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus[1] maintaining, on the basis of scriptural authority, the conception of an angelic hierarchy. The latter of these goes so far indeed as to enumerate in one of his *Orations* "certain angels and archangels, thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, brightnesses, and ascensions, and incorporeal mightinesses (or virtues)."[2] This enumeration is doubly interesting, first, because it is not derived directly from the scriptural canon, — the Nazianzen to the contrary, notwithstanding (but of that later); secondly, because it is the first mention in Christian literature of nine orders and of their names. St. Augustine, writing not long after that, about the year 400, professes ignorance of "that supernal and most beatific society, its distinctions, and its names"; but the Pseudo-Dionysius, a century

[1] See Hagenbach, *History of Doctrines*, II, 45.

[2] ἀγγέλλους τινὰς καὶ αρχαγγέλους, θρόνους, κυριότητας, ἀρχὰς, ἐξουσίας, λαμπρότητας, ἀναβάσεις, νοερὰς δυνάμεις ἢ νόας. *Orat.*, xxviii, 31. In what follows from other authors, I have kept the same correspondents for Greek words.

later still, in his *Celestial Hierarchy*, undertakes not only to distinguish by name and quality, but by precise analysis of rank. There are three classes of the heavenly host, he says, and these are subdivided into three orders apiece: the first, seraphim, cherubim, thrones; the second, dominions, and virtues or mightinesses, and powers; the third, principalities, archangels, and angels. This might be construed as a rearrangement of the list of Gregory Nanzianzen, with a substitution of seraphim for ascensions, — which is but natural, since the seraphs are the six-winged creatures that ascend nearest to God; and of cherubim for brightnesses. I think, however, that the Pseudo-Dionysius went to an earlier source, and of that something will presently be said. His "hierarchy" was adopted, in the sixth century, by no less an authority than Gregory the Great, but with two changes. In one discourse Gregory alters the relative position of virtues (or mightinesses), powers, and principalities; and for this Dante, some six hundred years later, takes him seriously to task. In another, he conveys, by a certain looseness of statement, the idea that the order of Lucifer which fell was from the first distinct from the nine which remained loyal. Hence the conflicting tradition of ten orders that re-emerges in the *Later Genesis* and other Anglo-Saxon poems of the ninth century; and afterwards in the sermons of Ælfric, who refers to Gregory the Great as his authority, saying that the orders were originally ten, — "angels, archangels, virtues, powers, principalities, dominions, thrones, cherubim, seraphim, and another which fell. Then was mankind made to fill the room of the lost order." [1]

[1] For particulars, see Ungemach, *Quellen d. fünf ersten Chester Plays*, pp. 18–24.

This explains the twofold tradition and traces the conception of a hierarchy as far back as the Pseudo-Dionysius (*c.* 500), and the Nazianzen (A. D. 300–390). These in turn profess to have drawn their inspiration from the Holy Scriptures; and the profession is not wholly to be rejected. For in *Isaiah* there appear the six-winged seraphim; in *Ezekiel* the cherubim and the four wheels full of eyes (the ophanim); and in *Daniel* the angelic hosts that surround the Ancient of Days and the flaming wheels. *Revelation* repeats the angelic host and the six-winged creatures "full of eyes within," and adds the seven lamps of fire that are Seven Spirits of God, and the thrones of the four and twenty elders about him who sat upon the Throne; *Colossians* mentions thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers; *Ephesians*, — principalities, powers, mightinesses (virtues) and dominions; and other of the epistles rehearse with variation two, three, or four of the same celestial orders.[1] But the enumerations of the Old Testament writers are both indefinite and meagre; and in the New Testament no single enumeration contributes more than four of the orders to the list of the Nazianzen, the Pseudo-Dionysius, or Gregory the Great. It is therefore much more likely that the carefully organised hierarchies with which these authors furnish us were derived from neither of these sources, but from some authority at once more explicit and comprehensive. This I believe to be the newly discovered apocalypse, called the *Secrets of Enoch*, which not only synopsises all earlier Hebrew fantasy concerning the constitution of the heavenly places, but is itself the source, sometimes even to words and their order, of the

[1] *Is.* vi, 1; *Ez.* i and x; *Dan.* vii, 9, 10; viii, 17–19; *Rev.* iv; *Col.* i, 16; *Eph.* i, 21; iii, 10; *Rom.* viii, 38; *1 Pet.* iii, 22, etc.

passages from the New Testament epistles, cited above. Since there is also a *Book of Enoch* of somewhat earlier origin, known as the Ethiopic, it is sometimes found convenient to designate the *Secrets* as the Slavonic. This because, as its recent editor[1] tells us, it was for more than twelve hundred years unknown save in Russia. "The book," he continues, "was much read in many circles in the first three centuries of the Church, and has left more traces of its influence than many a well-known book of the same (apocalyptic) literature." It purports to be a series of visions attributed to Enoch, the seventh from Adam; and is essentially different from the Ethiopic *Book* (170–64 B. C.), though in certain passages it is based upon the older apocalypse.

Some parts of this *Secrets of Enoch* are assigned to a date as early as 30 B. C., and they were originally of Hebrew composition; but the apocalypse, as a whole, was cast into its present literary form in Greek by an Alexandrian Jew during the first fifty years of our era. While, on the one hand, it displays familiarity with the historical books of the Old Testament, the *Psalms*, and the books of wisdom and prophecy, it anticipates, on the other, both in material and style, utterances to be found in the gospels, the epistles attributed to St. Paul and St. Peter, and the *Book of Revelation*, the later Christian apocalypses, the *Sibylline Oracles* and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs;* conceptions developed by Augustine, Clement of Alexandria, Philo, Origen, and other of the Christian Fathers; and traditions delivered by the unknown author of that strange product of the fifth century, — the *Book of Adam and Eve.*

[1] The *Book of the Secrets of Enoch.* Tr. by W. R. Morfill; ed. by R. H. Charles.

In a chapter of the earlier apocalypse of Enoch, known as the Ethiopic,[1] the seer, speaking of the glorious judgment of the heavenly ones by the Lord of Spirits, had said: "And He will call on all the host of the heavens and all the holy ones above, and the host of God, the cherubim, seraphim, and ophanim, and all the angels of power, and all the angels of principalities, and the Elect One, and the other powers on the earth, and over the water, on that day." This passage was written somewhere between 94 and 64 B. C. It gathers materials from *Isaiah* and *Ezekiel* and the *Psalms* for a more definite enumeration of the heavenly hosts. But it is in the *Secrets of Enoch*, in a passage based upon this, that, some thirty years before the Christian era, the heavenly hosts receive their most majestic and their first systematic elaboration.

"There was a very wise man and a worker of great things: God loved him, and received him, so that he should see the heavenly abodes, the kingdom of the wise, great, inconceivable and never-changed God". . . . So begins the Enoch of the *Secrets*. "Hear me, my children, for I do not know whither I am going, or what awaits me. . . . Make confident your hearts in the fear of God." Thus speaking the wise man is translated by angels. He sees the denizens of the various heavens to the sixth, the Place of the Righteous and the Terrible Places, and finally the Heaven that is highest and the seventh:[2]

"And I saw there a very great Light, and all the fiery hosts of archangels, and incorporeal powers; and dominions and principalities and powers (over things corporeal); and cherubim and seraphim and thrones; and

[1] lxi, 10.

[2] *Secrets of Enoch*, xx, 1–4. Tr. by Morfill.

the watchfulness of many eyes." Here the "very great Light" is the Light of the Holy Ones above — the angels *par excellence* as separate from the host of the heavens. Just so in the Ethiopic *Enoch*, we have "He will call on all the host of the heavens *and* all the holy ones above." And the "incorporeal powers" are the virtues of Gregory or the principalities of Dionysius: it matters little which. Excluding the "watchfulness of many eyes," we have in this the original of the nine orders of angels known to the early Fathers and the fathers of the mediæval stage. The orders are even arranged in the ternaries from which those of Dionysius, Gregory the Great, and Dante have descended: angels, archangels, and virtues; dominions, principalities, and powers; cherubim and seraphim and Thrones.

In the "many eyes" we have that *tenth* order which all the three-times-three of Dante and the theologians could not suppress — the order of the ophanim, those living wheels of eyes that go beside the cherubim of Ezekiel's vision — "As for their rings they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four." "There were ten troops," proceeds the Seer of the *Secrets*, "a station of brightness; and I was afraid and troubled with a great terror. . . . And all the heavenly hosts having approached stood on the ten steps according to their rank; and made obeisance to the Lord. And so they proceeded to their places in joy and mirth and in boundless light, singing songs with low and gentle voices, and gloriously serving him."

The traditions of the orders, with which our forefathers of the miracle plays were familiar, those of Erigena and Ælfric, and of the *Cursor Mundi*, and other mediæval

poems, are, therefore, descended from Hebrew apocalypses of the century preceding the foundation of Christianity. Strange to think that out of wells of fancy, yes, of inspiration, so remote, so long discredited by the very church that fostered the liturgical plays of our mediæval ancestors, those ancestors should have drunk draughts of poetry in simple faith that they were draughts of dogma originating in the Christian church. Still stranger to reflect that out of this non-canonical apocalyptic literature proceeded much other that is most sublime and poetically true in the canon as accepted by that church. Religion, in her mysterious avatars, is mother and foster-mother of more children of the House Beautiful than we moderns ordinarily apprehend.

From the same unconsidered source flows the allied tradition also, that man was created *not* "a little lower than the angels," but as the miracle plays have it, an order *like unto them*. "For man," says the Ethiopic *Enoch*,[1] "was created exactly like the angels to the intent that he should continue righteous and pure; and death which destroys everything could not have taken hold of him, but through this their knowledge (knowledge of the bitter and the sweet imparted by evil angels) they are perishing." And in the somewhat more recent *Secrets of Enoch*[2] the words of God run thus: "On the sixth day, I ordered my Wisdom to make man . . . and I placed him upon the earth; like a second angel, in an honourable, great, and glorious way."

That the angels were created on the first day, as the cycles of Chester and York inform us, is another tradition not found in the books of the scriptural canon. It derives from the *Book of Jubilees*, a kind of revision and

[1] *Book of Enoch*, lxix, 11. [2] *Secr. Enoch*, xxx, 8, 11.

enlargement, or Targum, of *Genesis* and *Exodus*, written originally in Hebrew over a hundred years before Christ.[1] This story, as well as that of the subsequent construction of Hell, descended to the *Cursor Mundi* and the miracle plays, by way of Gregory of Nazianzus and his younger contemporary, St. Augustine. Of these the former, indeed, was of the opinion that the angels were the entire rational world created prior to the world of sense or matter[2]; but St. Augustine held that while they are themselves the light which was created in the beginning before all other creatures, this *one* day of light included the other days of creation.[3]

The History of the "Fall of Lucifer"

Of the splendour of Lucifer, his pride and rebellion, his fall with those whom he had seduced, and his malignity against man — the tradition is even more ancient. The pride of the morning-star and his rebellion against the God of Light was poetry of Babylonian myth long before Abram left Ur of the Chaldees to seek him out a new country in the West. The followers of Zoroaster, too, had their doctrine of the seven heavens and of a hell for the spirits of defection. The sources of the antagonism between the fallen spirits and the human usurpers of their room are indeed principally extra-biblical.

It is in an ode denunciatory of Sennacherib,[4] which some post-exilic poet has splendidly interpolated into the prophecy of the older Isaiah, that the Hebrew conscious-

[1] *Jub.* ii, 2; edited by R. H. Charles.

[2] Greg. Naz., *Orat.* xxxviii, 9.

[3] *De. Civ. Dei*, xi, 9, quoted by *Cursor*, l. 360; Hagenbach, *History of Doctrines*, II, 43–45.

[4] *Isaiah* xiv, 12–21.

ness of the Lucifer legend first finds such expression as we still possess. Likening the long-since murdered Assyrian, the conqueror of Hezekiah, to "Lucifer, son of the morning," this poet cries "How art thou fallen from heaven! . . . For thou hast said in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit."

These star-like angels, Lucifer the arch-conspirator, his camp in the sides of the north, and his fall to the stones of the pit, — a legend learned by a Hebrew exile probably from his Persian deliverers, in the fifth or sixth century before Christ, are the ultimate inspiration of the Anglo-Saxon Cædmon and the dramatists of Chester and York. But the legend had yet to receive the impress of many minds before it reached the religious and artistic consciousness of the middle ages.

No work of pre-Christian authorship is more gorgeous with description of the origin and early fable of the universe than the Ethiopic *Enoch*. "In *Genesis* v, 24, it is said of Enoch that he walked with God. This expression was taken in later times to mean not only that he led a godly life, but also that he was the recipient of superhuman knowledge. It was not unnatural, therefore, that an apocalyptic literature should begin to circulate under his name in the centuries when such literature was rife." With the visions and similitudes attributed to Enoch "all the writers of the New Testament were familiar, and were more or less influenced by them in thought and diction. The book is quoted as a genuine production of Enoch by S. Jude, and as

Scripture by S. Barnabas. The authors of the *Book of Jubilees*, the *Apocalypse of Baruch* and *IV. Ezra*, laid it under contribution. With the earlier Fathers and Apologists it had all the weight of a canonical book, but toward the close of the third and the beginning of the fourth centuries it began to be discredited, and finally fell under the ban of the Church. Almost the latest reference to it in the Early Church is made by George Syncellus in his *Chronography*, about 800 A. D., who has preserved for us some long passages in Greek. The book was then lost sight of till 1773, when an Ethiopic version of it was found in Abyssinia by Bruce."[1] This apocalypse holds the reader with a rare fascination. Not only for its wealth of traditional Hebrew, and other oriental, sacred lore, its majestic visions and similitudes, its opulent imagery and sonorous diction, but also for its frequent anticipation of doctrines ordinarily supposed to have originated with the foundation of Christianity and the writers of the New Testament. It preaches a personal Messiah as "Christ," "the Anointed," "the Righteous," "the Elect," "the Son of Man"; it foresees the resurrection of all Israelites (first taught, says Mr. Charles, beyond possibility of doubt in *Daniel*, chapter xii,[2] but here made a commonplace of Jewish theology), the final judgment and the everlasting kingdom of the Messiah; and it develops the doctrine of "the angels which kept not their first estate." With the last of these teachings we are at present concerned.

It will be remembered that in *Genesis* there are preserved two versions of the Fall of the Angels, one assuming

[1] R. H. Charles in the *Gen. Introd.* to his collated edition of the *Book of Enoch*. Oxford: 1893.

[2] Written *c.* 164 B. C., according to *Encyclopædia Biblica*.

"Et vidi stellam de cælo cecidisse"
From "L'Apocalypse en français"

their defection before the creation of man, as indicated by the presence of the Serpent in the garden of Eden; the other implying that the Sons of God sinned first only when they had looked upon the daughters of men and seen that they were fair. The second of these versions underlies the account given in the Ethiopic *Book of Enoch*, but that account itself supplies many of the particulars used by later fabulists to elaborate the other tradition of the angelic catastrophe, *viz.*, that it was not for lust but by arrogance and rebellion.

"And it came to pass," says Enoch,[1] whose eyes were opened by God that he might see a vision of the Holy One in the heavens, "when the children of men had multiplied in those days, that beautiful and comely daughters were born unto them. And the angels, the sons of the heavens, saw and lusted after them, and spake to one another, 'Come, now let us choose wives from among the children of men and beget children.'" And they, who being immortal had not need to perpetuate their race as do the mortals of the earth, took mortal wives and taught them evil, and sinned themselves; and all the ways of man became corrupt. And the women bore unto the angels giants, whose ghosts should in time become the spirits of evil, walking to and fro upon the earth. "And the Lord spake to Rafael,[2] 'Bind Azâzêl (the chief offending son of the heavens) hand and foot, and place him in the darkness: make an opening in the desert, which is Dudâêl, and place him therein. And place upon him rough and jagged rocks, and cover him with darkness, and let him abide there forever, and cover his face that he may not see the light. And on the great day of judgment he shall be cast into fire. . . . And I will

[1] *Book of Enoch*, vi, 1–2. [2] *Enoch* x, 4–7.

heal the earth, that all the children of men shall not perish through all the secret things that the Watchers (from the heavens) have disclosed and have taught their sons.'"[1] . . . "And I went round," says Enoch, "to the place of chaos. And I saw there something horrible; I saw neither a heaven above nor a firmly founded earth, but a place chaotic and horrible. And here I saw seven stars of the heaven bound together in it, like mountains, and flaming as with fire. On this account I said, 'For what sin are they bound, and on what account have they been cast in hither?' Then spake Uriel, one of the holy angels, who was with me and was chief over them, and said, 'Wherefore dost thou ask, and why dost thou enquire and art curious? These are the stars which have transgressed the commandment of God, and are bound here till ten thousand ages, the number of the days of their guilt, are consummated.' And from thence I went to another place which was still more horrible than the former, and I saw a horrible thing. . . . And Uriel spake to me, 'This place is the prison of the angels, and here they will be imprisoned for ever.'"

Now these portions of the apocalypse were written before 170 B. C.; but the following interpolation, written shortly before the birth of Christ, assigns a reason for the punishment of the angels more consonant with the tradition of rebellious pride. The angel of the eighteenth chapter shows Enoch seven stars in a bottomless pit, "stars like great burning mountains, and like spirits which besought me. . . . 'This is,' said the angel, 'where heaven and earth terminate; it serves for a prison for the stars of heaven and the host of heaven. And the stars which roll over the fire are they which have transgressed

[1] *Enoch* xxi, 1–10.

the commandment of God before their rising, because they did not come forth at the appointed time.'" "And again I saw," says the Enoch of Chapters lxxxvi and lxxxviii,[1] "and behold a star fell from heaven . . and behold I saw many stars cast themselves down from heaven to that first star. . . . And the stars were bound hand and foot and laid in the abyss."

In other apocalyptic books, such as the Slavonic *Secrets of Enoch*, 30 B. C.–50 A. D., and in the legalistic *Book of Jubilees* of a somewhat earlier possible date, the story is similarly told. In the sixth chapter of the *Book of the Secrets*, Enoch sees in the second Heaven prisoners suspended, reserved for eternal judgment. They are the angels who apostatised from the Lord, and transgressed with their prince; they are gloomy in appearance more than the darkness of the earth, and unceasingly they weep. In the twenty-ninth chapter, which elaborates upon the Isaian ode, God says, "One of these in the ranks of the Archangels, having turned away with the rank below him, entertained an impossible idea that he should make his throne higher than the clouds over the earth, and should be equal in rank to my power. And I hurled him from the heights with his angels. And he was flying in the air continually, above the abyss."

Filtering through devious channels, the conception of the imprisoned angels reappears in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (about 1 A. D.), in the *Book of Revelation* (about 70–96 A. D.), in *Luke* (about 79–96 A. D.), and in *Jude*, the author of which styles himself "the servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James," but in fact lived about the end of the first, or in the second,

[1] Written about B. C. 161.

century. Later still, the conception appears in the *Second Epistle General* of Peter (probably the production of the middle of the second century after Christ).

From the apocalypses of Enoch are descended the famous verses of *Jude*, "The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under the darkness unto the judgment of the great day;"[1] and his "Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these."[2] Hence, also, the vision of St. John the Divine, of the dragon, who with his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. "And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought, and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceived the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."[3] Also that other vision of the fifth angel who sounded, "and I saw a star fall from heaven to earth, and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. . . . And they had a king over them which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon."[4] And the words of Jesus to the Seventy, recorded by Luke (x, 18), "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."

[1] *Jude* 6; *Enoch* x, 5–13, and *Secr. Enoch*, vi.

[2] *Jude* 14; *Enoch* lx, 8.

[3] *Rev.* xii; *Enoch* lxxxvi, 1; liv, 5–6; lxix, 5, 6, and *Secr. Enoch*, *passim*. For Michael, see *Enoch* x, 11, and elsewhere. For Satan, *Secr. Enoch*, xviii, 3; xxix, 4; xxxi, 4.

[4] *Rev.* ix; xx; *Enoch* xc, 24; *Secr. Enoch*, xlii, 1.

Michael Overthrows the Dragon

As we have seen, the biblical account in *Genesis* vi, and some of the accounts in Jewish apocalyptic literature, pointed to lasciviousness as the *initium peccati*. But from the time when Chrysostom and St. Augustine in the fourth century began to explain the commerce of the Sons of God with the daughters of men in terms of the intermarriage of the descendants of Seth, who were righteous, with the daughters of the Cainites, who were fair but carnal-minded, that explanation of the sin of the angels was relegated to the background. Pride is the motive advanced by Eusebius of Cæsarea about the year 300, and to this Gregory of Nazianzus in the following century adds "envy." It is in the hexameters of Bishop Avitus, in the early sixth century, that the legend of angelic insolence is first fully developed; and in the *Morals* and *Homilies* of Gregory the Great at the end of that century the doctrine is elaborated. "The first and more noble creature was the Angel who fell . . . and his first folly was arrogance." Upon the testimony of these two bishops, one of Vienne, the other of Rome, the English tradition mainly rests. In the seventh century Cædmon and Bede resume the story, the former to poetise, the latter to instruct; and the same influence is even more marked in the Anglo-Saxon poem of the *Later Genesis* and the *Homilies* of Ælfric. This brings us down to the beginning of the eleventh century. On the continent, meanwhile, that devoted student of apocalyptic literature, Syncellus, had written. He is the forefather, with his *Chronographia*, about 800 A. D., of the tribe of cyclic writers of traditional history to which Peter Comestor and Jacopus de Voragine and the author of the *Curser o' Werld* belong. But Syncellus, himself, is the last to base directly on the *Books of Enoch*, and to

retail the wantonness of the Sons of God. The others adopt the tradition of Lucifer's pride; though, indeed, Satan is not generally identified by name with the Lucifer of the Ode in *Isaiah* xvi, before the time of Anselm[1] (1034–1093) Comestor in his *Historia Scholastica* calls him Lucifer outright, and the *Legenda Aurea* about one century later (1275) quotes the passage *verbatim;* while the Seraphic Doctor, Bonaventura (1257) explains, saying, "*Dictus est autem Lucifer quia præ ceteris luxit, suaeque pulchritudinis consideratio eum excoecavit.*" Among the earlier Fathers of the Church, Eusebius was the only one who applied the appellation "Lucifer" to the devil. Neither Jerome nor Augustine ever did so.[2]

Following Peter Comestor the Early English *Genesis and Exodus* of the first quarter of the thirteenth century hands down in more modern style and more extended form than England hitherto had known the story of a pride-inflated Angel's doom. Duns Scotus *c.* (1300) finds the word *luxuria* more appropriate to the sin.

To another non-scriptural assumption of the Chester Play, that man was made in place of the ruined angels, and that because of this insult to his order, Lucifer contrived the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise, we have already once or twice adverted. These traditions are implied or explicit in the four great English cycles and in the Cornish plays. Indeed the Cornish *Origo Mundi*[3] and the N-Town play[4] emphasise the element of grudge in the Devil's procedure, by introducing a little scene, unknown to the rest of the cycles, in which Deus draws from Diabolus this motive of his action. The traditions in general are found in the *Cursor*,

[1] *De Casu Diaboli.*
[2] Hagenbach, *Hist. Doctr.*, II, 237 *n.*
[3] l. 300.
[4] *Fall of Man.*

and the *Legenda Aurea;* the latter of which uses Peter Comestor's exact phraseology, *Lucifer enim dejectus paradiso spirituum invidit homini*, etc. — "Lucifer, which was deject and cast out of heaven, had great envy to man that was bodily in Paradise, and knew well, if he might make him to trespass and break God's commandments, that he should be cast out also."[1] The story of man's substitution runs back through Anglo-Saxon literature,[2] Avitus of Vienne, and Anselm's famous treatise *Cur Deus Homo*, to Gregory and Augustine.

[1] Caxton's translation: *The Golden Legend, Hist. Adam.*

[2] Ælfric and the *Later Genesis.*

CHAPTER XVIII

THE OIL OF MERCY AND THE HOLY ROOD-TREE

Of the episodes dramatised in the various cycles no fewer than ten are drawn from a legend almost faded out of memory nowadays, but well known to church and people in the middle ages. The history of the Holy Rood-Tree, that is to say of the wood from which the Cross was made, is of such antiquity and it so deeply coloured the poetic consciousness of our forefathers that it should certainly be reintroduced to their children of to-day. It is closely affiliated with two other legends, one of which, the Promise of the Oil of Mercy, derives from sources still more ancient than Christianity itself, while the other, known as the Harrowing of Hell, has its origin both in early Christian and earlier Jewish apocalyptic literature.

The authors of the miracle plays upon these subjects drew their inspiration, of course, from the oral tradition of their day or from written versions in Latin, French, and English of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, in especial from the *Golden Legend* of Voragine and the *Cursor Mundi*. Of these I have most closely followed the last in my restatement of the story; but concerning the other sources I shall append a few remarks at the close of this section.

The Mission of Seth and the Promise of the Oil

When Adam, having sinned by eating with Eve of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge "that stood a-midward paradise," was put out of the garden, God did not leave him altogether comfortless:

> Ye shall be flemëd [banished] fro my face
> Till that I sendë you my grace:
> *The oil of mercy* ye must abide
> I hete [promise] to send it you, some tide.

And even in the wretched world without, where children were born to him and Eve, and where sorrow came with the death of Abel, some comfort was vouchsafed; for after a hundred winters of grief — then

> was born an holy child,
> Seth that was both meek and mild,
> Of whom Christ himselven cam
> Full far to tell fro first Adam,
> This child was Goddës privë friend
> And truly yielded him his tend [tithe].

And when Adam, being nine hundred years old and more, began to feel unsound, it was to Seth, of all his thirty sons and thirty daughters, that, leaning upon his spade one day, or some say his hatchet, he confided himself. In fact, there are who say that Adam was on his death-bed, and thence spake to Seth, in especial, of all the sixty children of his loins:

> "Son," he said, "thou must now go
> To Paradise that I came fro
> To the cherubin that is gateward."
> "Yea, sir," said Seth, "but whitherward."
> "Soon," said Adam, "I shall thee say
> How-gate thou shalt take thy right way:

Toward the east end of yonder dall
A greenë way findë thou shall;
In that way shalt thou find and see
The foot-steps of thy mother and me
The grass is fallow [yellow] on the green,
And ever since then has it been,
Where we came wending as unwise
When we were put fro paradise."

"Inquire of the angel who guards the gate" continued Adam, "whether I may have aught of the oil of mercy which was promised me when I left paradise." Seth forthwith departing traced the withered foot-prints of his parents back to the bounds of Eden. All gloppend (dazzled) with the mickle light of the garden, he told his errand to the gate-ward. "Go, then, thrust thy head in, but keep thy body without, and take heed to what thou shalt see," replied that angel.

When Seth a while had lookëd in
He saw so mickle wealth and win:
In earth there is no tongue may tell
Of flowers, of fruit, of sweetë smell,
Of joy and bliss, so many thing.

Amid the land, moreover, he saw a spring, wherefrom four rivers ran. Also he beheld a great tree with many branches, but bare of bark, no leaf thereon nor less nor more. "This tree is dry for Adam's sin," thought Seth, and turning he reported to the angel what had been revealed to him. "Look once more," the angel said. And he looked and saw an adder all about the tree. Yet a third time the angel bade him behold: and lo, the tree reached even unto heaven, and a new-born babe lay crying in the top. Then was Seth afraid; but when to the root he cast his eye,

Him thought it reached fro earth to hell
Where, under, he saw his brother Abèl.

"The Child is Christ," said the Cherub, then with cheer so mild, "he weeps now for thy father's sin, but in the fulness of time he shall cleanse it: and that cleansing of sin —

This is the oil that was hight him
To him and to his progeny."

"Go tell thy father, that in three days he shall die. But take with thee these three pips that here I hold of the tree whose fruit thy father ate, and when he dies

Do them under his tongùe root:
To many a man they shall be boot.
They shall be cedar, cypress and pine,
To many a man be medicine."

Now these trees betoken the Trinity: the cedar for its height, God the Father; the cypress for its sweet savour, God the Son; the pine for its gifts of fruit, God the Holy Ghost. And when Adam heard the tidings of Seth, that in three days he should die, and that in five thousand, two hundred and twenty years the oil of mercy should be sent (when Christ himself should suffer death for the sin of man) Adam laughed for joy, though never ere had our first father laughed; and he thanked God.

The Three Kernels and the History of the Cross-Wood

And on the third morn he died and was buried of Seth in the Vale of Hebron. Under his tongue, according to the cherub's words, the kernels were laid. And therefrom sprang three shoots; cedar, cypress, and pine, an ell in height; they waxed no more, through the days of Noah

and Abraham even till the day that Moses gave the law. And Adam's soul descended into hell. And all that died from that time on until the death of Christ, no matter how holy they were, descended to their first father — till the hour that Christ harrowed hell. All save Enoch and Elias. As to Enoch, the seventh from Adam, he was withouten peer. He walked with God; and was the first to find letters, and he wrote some books with his hand:

> To Paradise quick was he ta'en
> And there he lives in flesh and bane.
> He shall come forth before Doomsday
> To fight all for the Christian lay;
> With Antichrist then shall he fight
> For to wary [defend] the Christian's right, —
> He and his fellow Helia.
> Antichrist shall slay them twa
> But with their up-rise fro death to life.
> Then shall they fell that falsë strife.

Now after three thousand years and more, when Moses had led the Israelites out of Egypt across the Red Sea, he came to the Vale of Hebron and there encamped. And the people died of thirst. "What shall we drink, Moses?" quoth they. And Moses slept that night in the forest and in the morn, lo, a "ferly sight," three wands stood growing by his head, a cypress, a cedar, and a pine. And he looked on them with wonder, and knew that they betokened the three persons of the Trinity. And he drew them up without scathe or break, and ever bore them with him. Then the people of Israel found water, but it was bitter; and the wands made it sweet.

This is the tree of which it is said in the *Book of Exodus*, "And the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had

cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet"; but the legend of the Holy Rood sayeth that the marvel was of the wands of the seeds set under the tongue of Adam when Seth buried him. And from the rods there issued a sweet fragrance, so noble a smell filling the whole host that the Israelites thought that they had at last reached the Land of Promise. And Moses wrapped the rods in a clean cloth, and through the forty years of the wandering in the wilderness they were ever in leaf and flower; and by them were many wonders done: those that were bitten by snakes were healed, and those that were spat upon by venomous toads. And it was with these rods that Moses smote the rock in Horeb, and there burst out water like a brook that the people might drink. Then, when his end drew nigh, Moses planted the rods again beside a stream at the foot of Mount Tabor.

A thousand years went by; and David was King in Israel, and lay one night asleep, when there appeared to him an angel clear, God's own messenger, and told him to cross the Jordan to Mount Tabor, where he should find the rods that Moses had planted.

He knew them at the firstë sight,
For they were three all of a height,

and of a likeness and all green, and still each of his own fruit and leaf. He drew them up without breaking, and the people saw them shine with light. And to him hastening home, came sick men and were blessed with the rods and healed, and Saracens black and misshapen, their mouths in their breasts, their brows hairy to their ears, their sight high in the forehead, their arms with wrinkled hide set to the elbows in the sides of them, crumple-kneed and broken-backed and downward-look-

ing. They kissed the wands and their skins became as milk and all their shape was turned anew. On his arrival at Jerusalem, King David put the wands in a dike and set men to watch them all the night. But God, that all has for to keep, made the wands strike root so deep and join into one trunk so mighty that on the morrow none might move them. So the King built a wall about that place, and circled the Tree with a silver ring to know its measure, and each year for thirty years there was a circle set about the trunk. And the Tree grew apace, maintaining above the silver circles its triple branches, cedar, cypress, and pine. Under this Tree the King would pray and there he made his songs, and under it he first bethought him to build a temple to God. But for his sins he might not finish it: and Solomon ruling in his stead set it forward to completion. When the work was almost finished the workmen found that a master-beam was wanting, and nought would suffice but that they should cut down the Holy Tree which now had grown to a mighty stature. So King Solomon gave orders that the Tree be felled; and the workmen measured off a beam of it thirty-and-one cubits, but when they had hoisted it into place, behold it was a cubit too long. They took off the cubit, and hoisted it into place; when, lo, it was a cubit too short. Thrice they varied it; to no avail, the beam would not come to the square. So the Holy Tree with David's thirty circles of silver was laid in the temple. One day there came a woman named Maximilla to worship and pray, and sat down unawares upon that Tree, whereon her garments caught a-flame and burnt like tow,—

> And then began she for to cry
> As with a voice of prophecy,

And said, upon that Tree should hing
The lord of Hell, that blisful King:
Jesus Christ of maiden born
To save the wretched world forlorn;
And that the Jews should hear and see
That should the Cross make of that Tree.

Whereat the Jews, angered for that she had blasphemed against the only God they knew, dragged her forth from the temple and stoned her — some say, beheaded her:

She was the first that suffered shame
For mentioning of Jesu's name;

and an angel descended from heaven and bore away her soul before the sight of men, and called her "Christian." Then the Jews threw the Tree into a pool; but angels stirred the water and it healed the sick who were placed in it. So the Jews drew it out and laid it across the brook Siloam — some say Cedron — as a bridge. There it abode until the coming of the Queen of Sheba to hear the wisdom of Solomon. And it was hoped that the feet of sinful men might wear away the virtue from that Tree. But this Queen when she reached the bridge, bowed down and honoured it, and lifted her skirt, and barefoot waded the water rather than do dishonour to the Tree; and of that Tree she told many prophecies.

And, namely, also of Doomsday —
When all this world shall wind away.
This ilke Tree that I of say,
There it lay full many a day
Yet shall it be in the temple boun (ready)
At the time of Christ his passiòn.

When Christ a thousand years later, betrayed by Judas, was about to suffer death, the Jews would have none but the King's Tree whereon to hang him. They went,

therefore, to the temple and hewed it into the shape of the Cross; but not a foot could they raise it or stir it from its place. But when Jesus was brought, he louted down and kissed it, and without help of man he laid it upon his back. This was the Holy Rood on which he died. And after he had given up the ghost, that Rood blossomed from the hour of noon even unto the going down of the sun.

Of the traitor Judas, it is written that when he had done that sin, he went to his mother with the pieces that he had taken, and told her thereof. Now Judas was Jesus' almoner, he took in all the silver of the company but seldom gave account of it. "Son, hast thou sold thy master?" said his mother, then. "Now shalt thou suffer punishment, for I wot the Jews will slay him, but he shall rise again from his grave." "Rise up, mother, eft," he said, "nay, certes, it shall not be so. He shall no more rise than shall this cock that was plucked and scalded, yesternight." No sooner had he said that word than the cock arose and flew, feathered fairer than before, and crowed full shrill, through God the Lord, his might. And on the roof of the house he settled, rejoicing and singing as if he prophesied the day of the resurrection of Christ. This is the cock, some say, that the same night, thrice crowing, convicted Peter of sin, who had denied his Lord. But Judas, the accursed, terrified by that omen of the risen cock, went to the place where Jesus suffered, and seeing that he was already condemned to death, threw down the thirty pieces in the temple, whence they had aforetime been purloined by the Jews, and went out and hanged himself. Of these thirty silverlings, it is said by some that they were the circlets which David and Solomon had put about the trunk of the Holy Rood-

Tree; and that they were stolen from the care of the priestess of the sanctuary, Sara the daughter of Caiaphas, by that same Demas, or Dysmas, the robber who was crucified therefor by the side of Jesus, and asked mercy of him.

The Holy Cross Joseph of Arimathea would fain have preserved, after he had buried the body of Christ, but the Jews, fearful of its magic power, would not permit him to remove it. They took it away themselves, together with the crosses on which had been crucified the two robbers beside him, — their names were Dysmas, who was saved, and Gestas, the wicked one, — and the crosses were buried where none might find them, or, finding, know them apart.

Some three hundred and thirty years after, when the Emperor Constantine had received baptism, there appeared to him in the night, before a great battle, a vision of the Cross on which was written, "In this sign thou shalt conquer." He caused to be made a cross like unto it, and borne before him into battle, and thus he won the victory. Then he sent word of the omen to his mother Helena. And it happened that, at that time, her goldsmith, a Christian, had borrowed money from a certain Jew, who was a money-lender. According to the agreement the goldsmith was to pay the weight of the money in his own flesh in case he could not make good the amount of the loan. The Christian could not find money wherewith to repay, and the Jew was demanding the penalty; and in this case things were when the messengers of Constantine arrived. The contest being referred to them, they decided that the Jew might take the money's weight in flesh, provided he shed no blood in doing so. He thereupon offered to show Helena, if only she would remit the penalty, where Christ's Cross was buried. She

granted his request. The place being revealed, the crosses were dug up and borne to the city, and there the raising of a dead man to life by the true Cross discovered to Helena which it was. In the temple was found the remainder of the beam from which the Cross had been made, and it sent forth still a sweet odour through the temple. Of the four parts of the Cross Helena sent one to Rome, one to Alexandria, one to Constantinople, and the last remained in the temple. Of the nails she made a work for the bridle of Constantine, which blinded with its brilliance the enemy when he rode forth to war. One of the nails is now at St. Denis, — the author of this story has seen and kissed it. Others tell the story of the invention of the Cross otherwise, saying that it was a man named Judas who found the Cross, and that he was afterward made bishop and called Quiriacus, and that when he had found it the devil threatened him with vengeance.[1]

The Sources of the Stories

The history of the Oil of Mercy and the Rood-Tree I have taken, as I have said, from various sources according as they seemed best to furnish the incidents used by the authors of the dramatic spectacles based upon the tradition. Of these sources the principal is the *Cursor Mundi*. In that poem the passages descriptive of Seth's mission to Paradise, and of the martyrdom of Maximilla-Sibylla, follow a Latin legend written maybe between 1190 and 1210, while the rest of the story has been shown by Professor Napier of Oxford to be almost a

[1] This paragraph is based upon Napier's account of *Cursor Mundi*, and an Old French Poem, in several respects its original. E. E. T. S., 1894; Orig. Ser. 103. *The Holy Rood-Tree.*

literal translation of an Old French Poem on the history of the Cross-Wood. The manuscript of the French poem is of the fourteenth century, but the poem must have been composed at any rate by the middle of the thirteenth. Other authorities used in my sketch are two narratives of the fourteenth century, both derived in part from the *Latin Legend*. Of these the first, namely *The Story of the Holy Rood*[1] makes direct use of the sixth-century *Vita Adae et Evae* as well; and the second, *How the Holy Cros was Y-founde*[2] borrows also from the *Legenda Aurea* of Voragine. The former of these narratives gives a slightly different version of the Seth-mission from that of the *Latin Legend*. I have in the last place made use of an Anglo-Saxon version of *The Holy Rood-Tree* of which Professor Napier assigns the manuscript to 1150–1175. He thinks that this *Holy Rood-Tree* and the Old French Poem while written independently of each other have a common source in an original of about the year 1000. This original is, however, distinct from the *Latin Legend* of the Cross-Wood which contains the Seth story omitted by the group of the *Holy Rood-Tree*, and omits the Invention of the Cross supplied by that group. Both the Seth story and the story of Queen Helena are included in Voragine's *Legenda Aurea;* but they are not to be found in Peter Comestor, to whom the *Golden Legend* owes much in other respects.

The story of the inception of the *Holy Rood-Tree* in the three kernels given by the Cherub of Paradise to Seth cannot be traced to sources earlier than the *Latin Legend* of the twelfth century and that common original

[1] *Legends of the Holy Rood:* Harl. MS. 4196; Publ. R. Morris, E. E. T. S., 1871; Orig. Ser. 42. And Napier, *op. cit.*

[2] Morris, *Legends*, etc., p. 18, from Harl. MS. 2277, etc.

of the Anglo-Saxon *Holy Rood-Tree* and the Old French Poem which Professor Napier conjectures to have existed about 1000 A. D. The *motif* of the grains or seeds may possibly have been suggested by a passage in the sixth-century *Vita Adae et Evae*, to the effect that Seth and Eve, failing to obtain from the archangel Michael the oil of the Tree of Mercy with which to anoint the dying Adam, took with them perfumes instead: nard and crocus and calamus and cinnamon. One of the manuscripts of this text has indeed an additional clause at this point, according to which the angel gave Seth a branch with three leaves from the Tree of Paradise, but that Seth dropped it into the river Jordan as he was crossing over.[1] The earliest extant account of the mission of Seth and the death of Adam is the Apocalypse concerning Adam revealed to Moses by the archangel Michael. This was written about the time of Christ, or at any rate before the fifth century after Christ. It is in part the original of the *Vita*. In this apocalypse we find Seth and Eve vainly asking for the oil and receiving neither the three-leafed branch nor the seeds of the spices. It is Adam himself who takes crocus, nard, calamus, cinnamon, and other *seeds* with him upon his expulsion from Paradise.

According to Professor Meyer, the original *Book of Adam* — the source both of the Greek apocalypse and of the somewhat parallel Latin *Vita* — was in existence before the birth of Christ. Naturally neither that original nor the apocalypse made any prophecy concerning the coming of Christ with the Oil of Mercy. That conception appears first in the Latin *Gospel of Nico-*

[1] Meyer, *Vita Adae et Evae*, p. 236; in *Abh. d. k. Bayerischen Akademie d. Wissenschaften*, Bd. XIV, 1878.

demus, chapter nineteen (of the fourth or fifth century), and second in the Latin *Vita Adae et Evae* (of the century after), where the exact words of the Latin *Nicodemus* are interpolated in a translation of the utterly non-Christian apocalypse.[1] Eliminating, however, the Christian interpretation of the symbol, we find the elements of the mission of Seth in the Greek *Apocalypse of Moses*. Into the more remote inspiration of the story we shall presently make further inquiry.

The legend of Judas was the subject of a lost episode of the York cycle, and it remains in the fragmentary *Suspensio Judae* of Wakefield. The narrative as given above is taken from the *Cursor*, ll. 15962–16016, and from its source, the Latin *Judas Story*, printed from a manuscript of the twelfth century by Professor Napier.[2] To these accounts I have added, from the apocryphal story of Joseph of Arimathea, the passage connecting the thirty pieces of silver with Dysmas (*Sanctus Bonus Latro*). Their identification with the circlets of the Rood-Tree comes from the Cambridge Latin version of the Rood-Tree story, and the Anglo-Saxon story, both of the twelfth century.[3]

[1] The passage beginning, "When I, Seth, was praying at the Gates of Paradise," and ending, "Christ shall lead our father Adam into Paradise to the tree of Mercy."

[2] MS. Jesus Coll. Oxford, with 14th cent. variations. *Holy Rood-Tree*, p. 68.

[3] Napier, *Holy Rood-Tree*, pp. 25, 49.

CHAPTER XIX

THE OIL OF MERCY AND THE HARROWING OF HELL

After the legend of the Oil of Mercy enters the realm of Christian story it speedily becomes interwoven with other legends, notably those of Joseph of Arimathea, the Harrowing of Hell, and the Coming of Antichrist. These constitute the chief material of the Latin *Gospel of Nicodemus*, from which, since it is the most evident of the sources of mediæval poems and plays on these subjects, I select the following.[1]

After Joseph and Nicodemus had performed the obsequies for Jesus the Jews were greatly moved against them, and they took Joseph (some say, also Nicodemus) and shut him in a house where was no window, and set keepers at the doors, and sealed up the door where Joseph was shut in. And after the Sabbath day they took counsel by what death they should put Joseph to death, and they commanded him to be brought with much insult. But when the door of Joseph's prison was opened he was not found. And still the seals were sealed, and the high priest Caiaphas had the keys. Therefore the Jews were astonished, and dared no more lay hand on those who had spoken for Jesus. On this there came word that the body of Jesus also was missing; that he had risen from the tomb, and had been

[1] Latin *Evangelium Nicodemi*, XII–XVI.

seen talking with his disciples, and saying to them, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel." Therefore, at the bidding of Nicodemus the Council of the Jews sent out messengers to find Jesus if, peradventure, alive or in death he had been taken up into the mountains. And they came not on him; but on Joseph of Arimathea wandering at large they came, and yet no man dared lay hold upon him. But being entreated by the Council, Joseph saddled his ass and returned to the holy city; and to the Jews inquiring of his escape he made answer in these words: "On the day of preparation, about the tenth hour, ye shut me in, and I remained there the whole of the Sabbath. And when midnight came, while I stood and prayed, the house wherein ye shut me was suspended by the four corners, and there was a flashing of light in mine eyes, and I fell trembling upon the ground. Then one lifted me up from the place where I had fallen, and poured abundance of water upon me from my head to my feet, and put about my nostrils the fragrance of wonderful ointment, and rubbed my face with the water, as if washing me, and said to me, 'Joseph, fear not, but open thine eyes, and see who it is that speaketh to thee.' And looking I saw Jesus; and being afraid I asked him, 'Art thou Elijah?' And he said, 'I am not Elijah; I am the Jesus whose body thou didst lay in thine own new sepulchre.' And he showed me the place where I had laid him, and he put me in mine own house, and kissed me and said, 'For forty days go not from thine house; for, behold, I go into Galilee to my brethren.'"

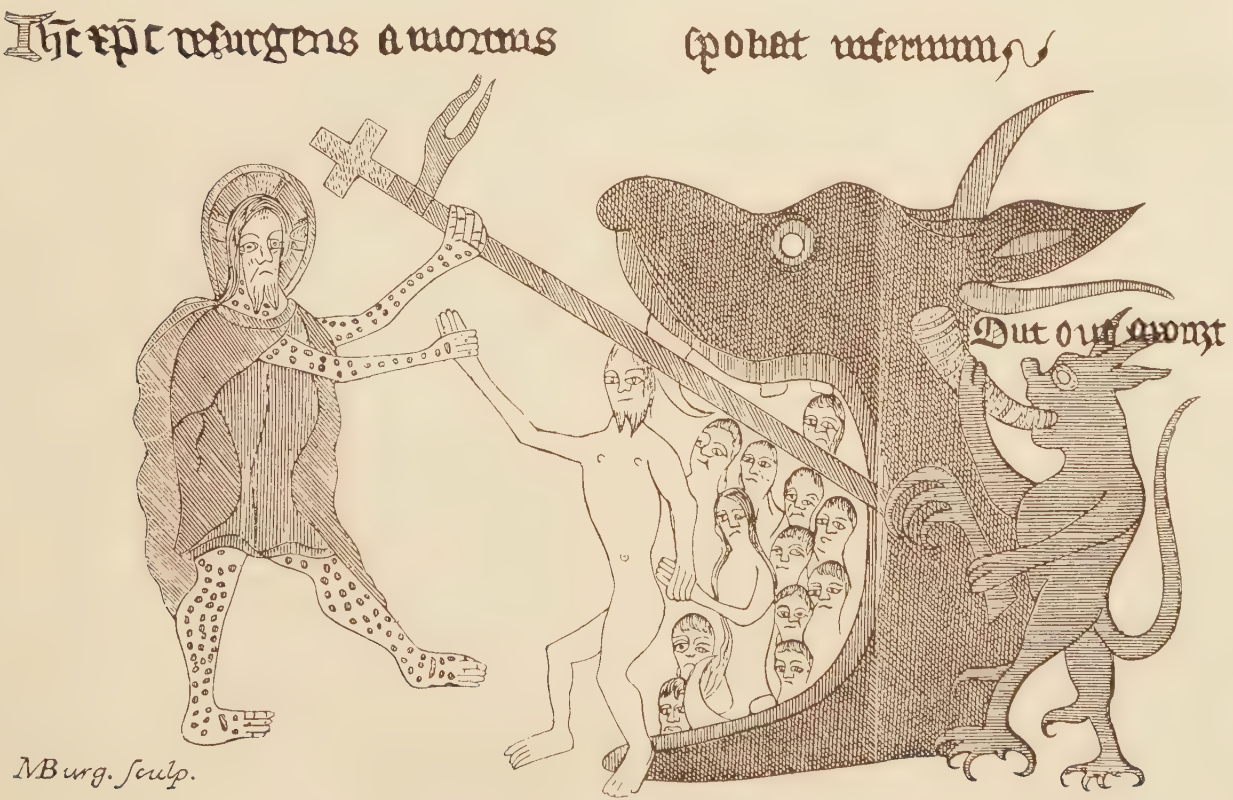
And soon after that the rulers heard how Jesus had been taken up into heaven before the eyes of his disciples, and they wondered thereat; but Joseph arose and said to

Annas and Caiaphas:[1] "It is more to be wondered at that he arose not alone from the dead, but that he hath raised alive from their tombs many other dead men, and they have been seen by many in Jerusalem. Lo, the same Simeon, the great priest who in the temple held Jesus in his hands, had two sons and we were present at their burial. Behold, even now they are in the City of Arimathea alive, and together in prayer. But they are speechless. Let us adjure them, that they tell us of the mystery of their resurrection."

And the sons of Simeon being found, the priests swore them by the law of God, and by Adonai himself, saying, "If ye believe that it is Jesus who raised you from the dead, tell us how ye rose from the dead." Then Carinus and Leucias, the sons of Simeon (according unto some the names of them were Carius and Lenthius), signed the sign of the cross upon their tongues, and their tongues were loosened, and they said, "Give us wherewith to write and we will set down each of us, separately, what we have seen." Now of what they wrote this is a part; and it was found that each had written the same thing, to wit:

"When we had been gathered unto our fathers in the pit of hell, in the blackness of darkness, on a sudden there appeared the colour of the sun like gold, and a kingly light of purple enlightening the place. And straightway Adam, the father of all mankind, with all the patriarchs and prophets rejoiced, and said, 'That light is the author of light eternal which hath promised to send us the co-eternal light.' Then Isaiah bare witness to the light, and our father Simeon, and John the fore-runner of the Highest, saying, 'This is the day-spring itself; the Son of God coming from on high is

[1] *Evangelium Nicodemi*, XVII-XXVIII (*Descensus ad inferos*).



Christ Harrowing Hell
From "Ancient Mysteries Described"

about to visit us who sit in darkness and the shadow of death.'

"And when Adam the first-formed, heard these things, he cried to his son Seth, and said, 'Declare unto thy sons, the patriarchs and prophets, all those things that thou didst hear from Michael the archangel, when I sent thee to the gates of Paradise to pray God to give thee of the oil of the tree of mercy, to anoint my body when I was sick.' Then Seth drew nigh to the holy patriarchs and prophets and said, 'When I, Seth, was praying to the Lord at the gates of Paradise, behold Michael, the angel of the Lord, appeared unto me, saying, "I am sent to thee from the Lord; I am appointed to the care of the bodies of men upon the earth. I say unto thee, Seth, labour not with God in tears, nor entreat him for the oil of the tree of mercy wherewith to anoint thy father Adam for the pain of his body; for thou canst in no wise receive of it save in the fulness of days and times, namely, till five thousand and five hundred years be past. Then shall come upon earth the most merciful Son of God to raise the body of Adam and the bodies of the dead; and at his coming he shall be baptised in Jordan. Then with the oil of his mercy shall he anoint all who believe in him; and that oil of mercy shall be for all generations of those who are born of water and the Holy Spirit unto life eternal. Then coming down within the bowels of the earth, the well-beloved Son of God, Christ Jesus, shall lead out our father Adam into Paradise to the tree of mercy."' When they heard these things from Seth, all the patriarchs and prophets rejoiced with great joy.

"Then Satan, the prince of death, and Hades were seized with great fear, because Christ was coming to set free those who were dead. And while they talked in their terror, lo, a sound as of thunder, and a crying of spirits, saying, 'Lift up your gates, ye princes, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in.' And the Lord Christ brake down the

gates that Death and Hades had barred against him; and he trampled upon Death, and seized Satan, the prince, and delivered him to the power of Hades, and took our father Adam with him into glory. And so Christ harrowed hell; and the prophets, David and Habakkuk and Isaiah and Micah, rejoiced and bare witness of the Christ whom they had prophesied. Then the Lord made the sign of the cross over Adam, and took him by the right hand, and He led him forth from the underworld; and all the saints followed him. And the Lord, holding Adam by the hand, gave him over to Michael the archangel. And all the saints followed Michael the archangel, and he led them into Paradise filled with mercy and glory. And there met them two men, most ancient of days; and the saints asked them, 'Who are ye that have not been dead with us in the underworld, and yet have been stationed in Paradise in the living body?' One of them answered, and said unto them, 'I am Enoch who was translated hither by the word of the Lord; and he that is with me is Elijah, the Tishbite, who was taken up in a fiery chariot. Here we have been hitherto, nor have we tasted death, but are reserved to the coming of Antichrist with whom we shall contend in the power of divine signs and miracles; and we shall be slain by him at Jerusalem, but after three days and a half we shall again be received alive into the clouds.'

"And while these things were talked of with Enoch and Elijah, behold there came up another, a very wretched man, bearing on his shoulders the sign of the cross. And when they saw him, the saints said unto him, 'Who are thou, for thy countenance is like unto that of a robber, and why bearest thou the sign of the cross upon thy shoulders?' And he answered them that he was indeed a robber, but that crucified upon the cross beside the Christ he had believed in him; and the Lord had received his prayer and said, 'This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.' And he had given him the sign of the

cross that the angel guarding the gate of Paradise might suffer him to enter and abide the coming of Christ with Adam and all his sons that were holy and just."

These are the divine and sacred mysteries which Carius and Lenthius saw.

Thus became that oil in place
That God had Adam hight of grace,—
Long might Adam think the space
Of exile from that lordes face.

Of the episodes involved in these legends, as well as the motives, practically all were dramatised by the Cornish miracles, and many by the French *Mystère de la Nativité*. In the York play of Christ led up to Calvary, the third soldier says:

I have been gar make
This Cross, as ye may see,
Of that lay over the lake—
Men called it the kingis tree.

In the lost Beverley cycle there was a pageant of Adam and Seth, which the "Shermen" played; in the Wakefield plays the Oil of Mercy is mentioned by Noah first and then by Abraham. In the Chester and Cornwall plays and in the French mystery of the *Resurrection* especial emphasis is laid upon that part of the story. The Harrowing of Hell is a spectacular feature of all the cycles.

Biblical, Apocalyptic, and other sources

The sixth-century *Life of Adam and Eve*, the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, and the still earlier *Apocalypse of Moses* are after all but channels through which some of these

conceptions have flowed. The sources of inspiration are further back. The extreme antiquity of the vision of Paradise and the promise of mercy illustrates both the cosmopolitan quality of the mediæval literary consciousness and the vitality of religious symbol and explanatory myth. The tree of life, like the fall of Lucifer, is a theme in Babylonian poetry of times long antecedent to the writing of the early Hebrew scriptures.[1] Originally there was but one tree in the garden of Eden, that of youth; and there was a water of life. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was added by some Hebrew editor, probably as an explanation of the tree of perpetual youth. The art of living smoothly depends upon the knowledge of good and evil, in fact upon the knowledge of all things. "This is the life eternal to know thee, the only true God."

The best known biblical bases for the description of Eden and the glories thereof are, of course, the chapters in *Genesis*, and the references in *Ezekiel*, — Eden, the garden of God, its precious stones, its cherub, its holy mountain, its trees of cedar and fir and chestnut.[2] The latter references, however, are only a metaphorical adaptation of an ancient North Arabian myth to certain kings of Tyre and Egypt who lived long after the time of the Ezekiel of Jehoiachin's captivity, 597 B. C. Both tree of life and tree of wisdom are expressly mentioned in the Ethiopic *Book of Enoch*, — the portion written before 161 B. C.; also the fragrance of the former and the fruit reserved for the elect, and the four streams that flow from its root; the presence of Michael, too, though explaining things somewhat differently, — all as in the legend of what Seth saw in Paradise. But here it was Enoch

[1] *Encyc. Bibl.* art. *Paradise.*

[2] *Ezek.* xxviii, xxxi.

who saw. In the capricious favouritism of popular myth-making the apocalyptic adventures of the superhuman Enoch were in time transferred to Seth, and those of Seth still later to some other darling of the race, — Moses, or Elijah, who was reported to have "walked with God." The description of the earthly paradise in the *Book of Enoch* is so beautiful and at the same time so admirably illustrative of the transition of the myth toward its early Christian form that I quote it almost in full.[1]

Enoch sees a place of magnificent mountains: "And the seventh mountain was between these, and in their elevation they all resemble the seats of a throne; and the throne was encircled with fragrant trees. And amongst them was a tree such as I had never yet smelt: nor were others like it; it had a fragrance beyond all fragrance: its leaves and blooms and wood wither not for ever; and its fruit is beautiful, and it resembles the dates of a palm. . . . Then answered Michael, one of the holy and honoured angels who was with me, and was in charge thereof: 'Enoch, what dost thou ask as touching the fragrance of this tree and what dost thou seek to know?' Then I, Enoch, answered him and said: 'I should like to know about everything but especially about this tree.' And he answered me and said: 'This high mountain which thou hast seen, whose summit is like the throne of the Lord, is His throne, where the Holy and Great One, the Lord of Glory, the Eternal King will sit when he shall come down to visit the earth with goodness. And no mortal is permitted to touch this tree of delicious fragrance till the great day of judgment, when he shall avenge and bring everything to its consummation for ever; this tree, I say, will then be given to the righteous and humble. By its

[1] Eth. *Enoch*, xxiv, 3–xxvi.

fruit life will be given to the elect;[1] it will be transplanted to the north, to the holy place, to the temple of the Lord, the Eternal King. Then will they rejoice with joy and be glad: they will enter the holy habitation: the fragrance thereof will be in their limbs, and they will live a long life on earth, such as thy fathers have lived: and in their days no sorrow or pain or trouble or calamity will affect them.'[2] Then blessed I the Lord of Glory, . . . because that he hath prepared such recompense for the righteous, and hath created it and promised it to them." This passage is followed by a description of the four streams that flow from the base of a holy mountain in the middle of the earth. Of course there are references here to actual localities in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, but the description is so vividly suggestive of the garden of Seth's vision in the thirteenth-century *Cursor Mundi*, and the Cornish *Origo Mundi*, that I have refrained from italicising particulars only for fear of italicising the whole.

In a later chapter we read of Enoch[3] that he beholds the other tree: "And I came into the garden of righteousness and saw beyond those trees many large trees growing there . . . and the tree of wisdom which imparts great wisdom to those who eat of it. And it is like the Carob tree: its fruit is like the clusters of the vine, very beautiful: the fragrance of the tree goes forth and penetrates afar. And I said: 'This tree is beautiful, and how

[1] Hence the promise to Adam, on his expulsion from Paradise, of the fruit of the tree of life on the day of his resurrection. *Apoc. Moses* (A. D. 1–400). And the promise of Christ in *Latin Gospel of Nicodemus*, xix.

[2] Hence, the like passage in the *Apocalypse of Moses*. See Meyer, *Vita Adae*, 204.

[3] Eth. *Enoch*, xxxii.

beautiful and attractive its look!' And the holy angel Rafael, who was with me, answered me and said: 'This is the tree of wisdom of which thy old father and aged mother, who were before thee have eaten; and they learnt wisdom and their eyes were opened, and they recognised that they were naked, and they were driven out of the garden.'"

In the *Secrets of Enoch* (B. C. 30–A. D. 50) the approach to the mediæval legend is even closer.[1] "And these men took me from thence, and brought me to the third heaven, and placed me in the midst of a garden. And I saw all the trees of beautiful colours, and their fruits ripe and fragrant, and all kinds of food which they produced, springing up with delightful fragrance. And in the midst, in that place, is *the tree of life on which God rests* when he comes into Paradise. And this tree cannot be described for its excellence and sweet odour. And it is beautiful more than any created thing. And on all sides in appearance *it is like gold and crimson, and transparent as fire, and it covers everything. From its root in the garden there go forth four streams which pour honey and milk, oil and wine,* and are separated in four directions, and go about with a soft course. And they go down to the Paradise of Eden, which is between corruptibility and incorruptibility. . . . *And there is another tree, an olive tree, always distilling oil.* And there is no tree there without fruit, and every tree is blessed. . . . And I said, 'What a very blessed place is this!' And those men spake unto me: 'This place, Enoch, is prepared for the righteous who endure every attack in their lives from those who afflict their souls: who turn away their

[1] Slav. *Enoch*, viii.

eyes from unrighteousness. . . . For them this place is prepared as an eternal inheritance.'"

Here we have an anticipation, in the tree in which God rests, of the resting-place of the unborn Christ, the child whom the Seth of the mediæval Latin legend sees and hears in Paradise; anticipations, too, of the mickle light that made the Seth of the *Cursor Mundi* "all gloppend"; and of the four streams flowing from the root of the tree; and of the tree of mercy as well, and the oil. These last are, of course, the antecedent of the *arbor* and the *oleum misericordiæ* of the lost *Book of Adam*, and of the *Apocalypse of Moses*, the Latin *Vita*, and the *Gospel of Nicodemus*.[1]

In a later chapter[1] Michael the archangel again takes charge of Enoch, — as he does at the close of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, — and takes from him his earthly robe, and anoints him with the holy oil of the Lord, excellent, fragrant, shining like a ray of the sun. "And I gazed at myself, and I was like one of His glorious ones." In Chapters XLI and XLII, Enoch finds "Adam and Eve and all our forefathers from the beginning" in Hades; just as the sons of Simeon found them, according to *Nicodemus* and the fiction of legend and drama based thereon.

The Hades of Enoch is close by the "Paradise of Eden, where rest has been prepared for the just, and that is open to the third heaven, and shut from this world. . . . And the angelic guards of the Paradise of Eden will, at the last coming, lead forth Adam with our forefathers and conduct them there that they may rejoice . . . in the light and eternal life." There is much here to suggest the condition of the Enoch and Elijah of the

[1] xxii, 6

various plays on the harrowing of hell. The writer of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* must have been intimately acquainted with Hebrew apocalyptic literature. It is interesting to notice, furthermore, that even in little things, such as the period of mourning observed by Adam and Eve for the death of Abel, and their coming together again at the command of the Lord, cyclic miracles like the Cornish, ecclesiastical poems such as the *Cursor*, and prose legends like the *Aurea* of Voragine, follow with but slight variation stories handed down by the *Book of Jubilees*[1] and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and other Jewish haggadic or apocalyptic books.

[1] *Jubilees*, iv, 7; *Leg. Aur.*, History of Adam; *Cursor*, l. 1192.

CHAPTER XX

THE COMING OF ANTICHRIST

The Prophecy

To the coming of Antichrist reference is made in all the English cycles. But only one, the Chester, develops it into dramatic form. The prophecy as given there, and in the slightly earlier *Cursor Mundi* and the *Golden Legend* is as follows:[1]

Before the second coming of Christ and the day of doom, a wicked one shall arise. He will call himself by the name of the Holy One, the Elect of Israel, he will assert that the prophecies of Moses, David, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, foretelling a Messiah, were of him; and that he who had heretofore called himself Messiah, a certain fellow of the baser sort — "Jesus, he hight, I understand" — was nought other than imposter. This Antichrist, the wicked one, will not hesitate to build the temple again and be honoured therein as God. He will have many leal to his service, and will war against the good, and ruin the gospel.

Wise clerks say that Antichrist will be a Jew of the tribe of Dan (for it was prophesied that Dan should be as a serpent, smiting the good). He shall be cursed entirely. The Devil, who, though bound by the Lord, and in prison after the harrowing of the underworld,

[1] Based chiefly on Morris's abstract of *Cursor*, 21971–22426, and the Chester play.

Enoch, Elias, and the Antichrist
From "L'Apocalypse en français"

will be at his birth. For Satan shall be loosed and work woe. The *Book of Revelation* tells of the Angel with the key of the pit where Satan lies. But his binding is only for a thousand years. When loosed he will beguile many. As the Holy Ghost lighted upon Mary, so Satan will descend on the mother of Antichrist. As Christ was born in Bethlehem, a place of grace, so Antichrist shall be born in Babylon, a town of pride and idolatry. Bethsaida and Chorazin shall foster him; enchanters, necromancers, and jugglers shall nourish and fill him with falsehood. All the Christians in Jerusalem Antichrist will slay; he will set his throne on Solomon's temple, and great emperors and kings will turn to him; he will destroy all that was hallowed by Christ; he will send out his preachers, and do many violent works against nature. Antichrist may even raise the dead; but such deeds will not be true. Good men will be puzzled whether he be Christ or not. He will search all lands against the Christians; he will draw some by rich presents, others by fear, others by miracles. Then shall arise great sorrowing; men will flee to the hills; he in the house will leave his goods. The Christians will either forsake Christ or undergo hard vengeance, till they die in Christ. This sad time will last two years and a half, for our Lord will shorten it. We know that the kings of Greece and Persia were chief kings formerly; and that Rome was head over all receiving tribute. St. Paul says that before Antichrist comes there shall be a dissension among these; the kingdoms will rise against Rome; and a great king of France shall be made Lord of Rome. This king shall be blest; he will end his reign at Jerusalem, giving up crown and sceptre to Christ. So shall end the Roman empire. After this Antichrist will show himself, the Wicked One! He

will exalt himself above the Trinity. He will simulate Christ, saying that he has come to gather in the Jews. He will even prophesy his own death and resurrection; and the kings shall mourn him and lay him in the tomb, saying, "If he rise again, Him will we honour day and night as the saviour of mankind." Then Antichrist will come out of the tomb, calling upon them to worship him, and they shall do so. And he will send forth upon them a spirit, saying that it is "My Holy Ghost;" and their hearts shall be light; and he will bless them with worldly goods, cities, castles, towns, towers, principalities, and kingdoms.

> Two prophets, then, shall come on high,
> That been Enoch, and eke Helyè.

And they shall teach the kings that this is not Christ but a devil's limb, and make war against Antichrist, but he will slay them. Then our Lord shall send judgment on Antichrist; others say that Michael the archangel will destroy him in Babylon.

And in the article of death, the Antichrist shall be heard calling, "Help, help, help, help! Help Sathanas and Lucifer." Then he shall die, and two demons shall hear him and come and bear him down to hell. Then Enoch and Elijah shall rise from the dead, and Michael shall say to them:

> You have been long, for you be wise,
> Dwelling in earthly Paradise;
> But to Heaven, where Himself is,
> Now shall you go with me.

Its Origin and Growth

Though this legend is narrated, as we have seen, in the *Cursor* and the *Legenda Aurea*, they are not the only

The Massacre of Enoch and Elias
From "L'Apocalypse en français"

sources of the unique and spectacular play of Chester. The drama itself shows kinship also with a Latin play acted on the continent about 1160, and probably in the presence of the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. The prophecy in its religious aspect was evidently based upon St. Paul's warning to the Thessalonians[1] concerning the second coming of the Lord, "Let no man deceive you; that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of Sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. His coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. He shall delude man; but that Wicked shall at the last be revealed, and the Lord shall consume him with the brightness of his coming." To this forecast picturesque materials were added from the visions of Daniel (vii–xi) and the prophetic description of the Beasts in *Revelation* (xi–xvii). The fable received its more dramatic impetus, as we have already remarked, from the words attributed to Enoch in the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, "I am Enoch, who pleased God, and was translated hither (to Paradise) by him; and this is Elijah the Tishbite; and we are to live until the end of the world; and shall be sent by God to resist Antichrist, and to be slain by him, and after three days to rise again, and to be caught up in clouds to meet the Lord."

Traces, however, of elements other than the religious are apparent in the story. The Wicked One would seem to be a personification couched, on the one hand, in terms of an old and fairly consistent Jewish tradition of the end of the world, which is only in part de-

[1] *2 Thess.* i, ii.

pendent upon the prophecies of the *Book of Revelation* and *Second Thessalonians;* and on the other hand, in terms of progressively changing political crises. The political factor had undergone mutation with the progressive conditions of history. As far back as the time of the captivity of Judah, 587 B. C., the Wicked One is a foreign foe of the kingdom; a conception poetically matured in the chapters of *Ezekiel* (xxxviii–ix) where Gog, of the land of Magog, chief prince of Mescheck and Tubal, is described as mustering his forces for an inroad upon Palestine from the north. With awful judgments (like those of the fifteen signs that precede the day of doom) the Lord overthrows him and his hosts; and Israel lives once more with Judah in freedom, unity, peace, prosperity, and righteousness. This apocalypse appears to refer to an expected invasion by the Scythians about 580 B. C. In Daniel's vision, too, of the four Beasts, the disturber is a foreign power. In the early Christian tradition the dreaded invasion is of the Huns, whose westward migration the Roman Empire alone can stay. Rome therefore comes to be the bulwark against the modern Gog and Magog. In the writings of St. Paul, however, and in *Revelation*, the "man of sin," the "son of perdition" — who is to seat himself in the temple and claim Messianic honours, dominate, like Gog, the kings of Egypt, Lybia, and Ethiopia, mark men with the mark of the beast, work celestial wonders, persecute the righteous, be unmasked by the two witnesses of the true Christ, put them to death, drive the true believers into the wilderness, and finally be overthrown in an angelic battle where Christ or Michael leads the victorious host, — this son of perdition is no foreigner, but a Jew; one of the tribe of Dan (says the apocryphal *Testament of Dan*). The

The Death of Antichrist and the Ascension of Enoch and Elias
From "L'Apocalypse en français"

Gog tradition was not fully absorbed in the modern Antichrist belief until some six centuries after the death of Christ. Then a new historical significance was suggested by the identification of Gog or Antichrist with the conquering Mussulman. Meanwhile, the Antichrist of St. Paul and of the *Book of Revelation* was gradually assimilated with Belial, the evil spirit of the air, — this because the Jewish apocalyptic writers of the first centuries before and after Christ preached insistently of a war to be waged in the last days between the Messiah and Belial or Beliar. So the early Christian writers, having identified Belial with Antichrist, and finally with the Dragon as in *Revelation*, revived that ancient Babylonian myth of the rebellion of Lucifer, and his attempted usurpation of the place and power of the Most High,[1] to which in after years our mediæval ancestors were to turn for the opening spectacle of all dramatic cycles. As the spiritual conflict of the miracles begins with Lucifer, so with Antichrist it ends; and these twain are but the personification of the same principle of rebellious pride.

The political tradition was as a whole introduced to Western literature by the monk Adso of Toul, who in the tenth century made a compilation, called *De Antichristo*, of materials which he drew from a seventh-century *Apocalypse* of the Pseudo-Methodius, and from the third of the famous *Sibylline Oracles*, lines 63 to 74, perhaps of the fourth century. Of these sources the former derives from various Jewish apocalypses; while the latter reproduces a myth of Nero Redivivus, who, as Beliar or Belial, is at the latter days to return and work delusion of the church by lying wonders. And of this apprehension

[1] See *Encyc. Bib.*; Hagenbach; and Dorner, *System of Christian Doctrine*.

of renewed political oppression early traces may be found in the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, in the works of St. Jerome and Hippolytus, and of the well-known prophet of the Syrians, Ephraem, who died about 378 A. D.

Beside these legends, so fruitful of narrative and dramatic harvest for the middle ages, there are others drawn largely from the apocryphal books of the New Testament, of equal fascination and of no less vogue in the days of the cyclic drama. We cannot, for lack of space, give attention to them here. But of some, such as the Nativity, Childhood, and Betrothal of the Blessed Virgin, her Assumption and Coronation; the stories of Veronica, Magdalene, Pilate, and a few others, a word will be said in connection with the sources of the cycles as considered in the appendix to this volume.

CHAPTER XXI

THE RELATION OF MIRACLES TO MORALS, AND OF MORALS TO INTERLUDES

Miracles and Morals

An unfortunate misapprehension has obtained currency to the effect that there was a deliberate transition, chronological and logical, from the miracle cycle to the "morality," and thence to something entirely different called the "interlude"; and that certain steps in the development of comedy were taken *pari passu* with this transition. It is, for instance, said, that "in the progress of the drama, Moralities followed Mysteries and were succeeded by Interludes. When folk tired of Religion on the Stage they took to the inculcation of morality and prudence; and when this bored them they set up Fun."[1] This statement of one of the most genial and learned of English scholars was of course not intended to be scientific. It represents what, in general, seem to be the facts, but it may be so easily misconstrued in support of several popular misconceptions that I must, with the utmost respect, attempt to qualify some of its clauses. To begin with, the terms are misleading: "mystery" suggests the French *mystère*, of which the career was quite different from the English miracle or miracle play; and as to "morality," though the word occurs in an English manuscript of the sixteenth century, it is even there borrowed from the French. Its

[1] Furnivall, *Digby Plays*, Forewords xiii.

history in France may be found in Petit de Julleville.[1] The term is never used by the English contemporaries of these plays. The nearest approach to it on the part of our ancestors is "Moral," "Moral Play," or especially "moral," "goodly," or "pithy Interlude." It cannot be said that the moral play followed the miracle. The earliest moral in England of which we have information is the *Play of the Lord's Prayer* mentioned in the preamble to the ordinances of the guild in York which performed it. It must have existed before 1384, and was played until 1582. It presented "vices for scorn and virtues for praise," by means of separate pageants, one of which was the pageant of Sloth. The play is now lost, but we can form a definite idea of it from the Beverley *Minute-book*[2] where an entry is made, May 29, 1469, of a *Paternoster Play* divided into a general pageant of Vicious, and seven others of Pride, Lust, Sloth, Gluttony, Hatred, Avarice, and Anger. The York play was evidently a moral; in point of antiquity, it rivals the collective York miracles themselves; and it persisted upon the stage as late as they.[3] Another moral, though we do not know whether it was so called, is the *Creed Play* of the York guild of Corpus Christi. The play, like its guild, may date back to 1408. It was acted, probably, in various pageants during the palmy days of the miracle cycles, and the city council are still trying to have it performed as late as 1568, twenty-one years after the guild has gone out of existence, and within a decade of the last performance of the miracle plays. As to morals still extant, if the plays called the

[1] *La Comédie et les Mœurs en France au moyen âge.* Paris, 1886, p. 45 *et seq.*

[2] Leach, *Some English Plays*, etc., *Furn. Misc.*, p. 221.

[3] Lucy Toulmin Smith, *York Mysteries*, XXVIII.

Pride of Life, and the *Castell of Perseverance* date from the first decade of the fifteenth century, as appears to be established, they also must have been composed while the miracles were in process of formation: about the time of the completion of the Wakefield cycle, before the last pageants were added to the *Ludus Coventriæ*, maybe half a century earlier than the Digby miracle-marvels of the *Magdalene* and *St. Paul*, which themselves possess features of the moral play, and two full centuries before miracles ceased to be played. While the biblical play still ran its course under the conduct of the crafts in various towns, the allegorical, known by its flavour as the moral or moral play, or by its rapidly diminishing proportions as the "enterlude," flourished under the patronage, not only of the crafts, but perhaps, with better grace, under that of school, castle, and court. Nor can it be said that one of these kinds survived the other. The last morals worthy of the name were written by Robert Wilson within a decade after 1579, when last the York miracles were performed; the quasi-morality by Greene and Lodge called the *Looking-Glass* preceded the last performance of the Chester plays by thirteen, and of the Beverley by seventeen years. Plays of the moral and scientific kind, to be sure, were presented at the universities many years later; the *Lingua*, for instance, in 1607, and *Technogamia*, in 1618; but these were artificial survivals of the stock. The moral was, therefore, rather a younger contemporary and complement of the miracle than a follower, or a substitute for it.

Perhaps the misconception of which I have spoken has been fostered by the idea that the allegorical characters of the moral were derived from sporadic figures of that description found in some of the miracle plays and in

similar pageants of the middle ages. But as Ebert, Ward, and Creizenach have shown, neither miracle nor moral play need have derived its allegorical method from the other. The explanation of the practice is pyschological and obvious; its history is traceable to the personification of abstract ideas common in the ethical or sacred writ of every faith and race. The motives of allegorical drama may be detected in Latin literature all the way from the *Anticlaudianus* of Alanus de Insulis, 1202, back to the *Psychomachia* of Prudentius, 400. The World-Flesh-and-Devil allegory flourished from 1200 on, but it draws its inspiration from St. Paul's armour of the Christian, *Ephesians* vi, 11, etc., and St. Paul in his turn was elaborating upon the "complete armour of the righteous" described in the *Wisdom of Solomon*, v, 17–19, by an Alexandrian Jew of the second century before Christ. The earliest dramatic representations of the kind of which I know are the *Lord's Prayer* already mentioned, and the contest between the Seven Virtues and Seven Vices performed in Tours in 1390. Allegory is already found in Cædmon and Cynewulf; it bursts into full bloom with Guillaume de Loris, Langland, Chaucer, Lydgate, and Gower. In the *Pastime of Pleasure* it falls into the sere, but from Brandt and Barclay it receives an infusion of concrete life and character, and so puts forth its buds afresh. One of the earliest allegorical representations in the miracle plays was that of the four "daughters of God" in the eleventh N-Town play. But these daughters of God are earlier found in the thirteenth-century work of Langton, and in Grosseteste's *Château d'Amour;* and at the end of the twelfth century, in a production of Guillaume Herman. It has been pointed out that Herman's conception is, in turn, based upon the "Mercy and

Truth are met together; Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other," of the eighty-fifth *Psalm*.[1] Allegory, both in literature and in drama, commanded the attention of the public contemporaneously with scriptural narrative. People, therefore, did not wait until they were "tired of religion on the stage" before "they took to the inculcation of morality and prudence;" nor could they have hoped to escape religion by taking to the moral play. The moral plays, like those which were originally liturgical, aimed at religious instruction. But as the scriptural-liturgical illustrated the forms of the church service and its narrative content, the moral illustrated the sermon and the creed. The former dealt with history and ritual, the latter with doctrine; the former made the religious truth concrete in scriptural figures and events, the latter brought it home to the individual by allegorical means. The historical course of the drama was not from the scriptural play to the allegorical, but from the collective miracle and collective moral, practically contemporary, to the individual miracle and individual moral. The dramatic quality of the moral was, as we shall presently remark, not the same as that of the miracle, but it neither supplants nor fully supplements that of the miracle.[2]

Morals and Interludes

The distinction between "morality" and "interlude" has likewise been unduly and illogically emphasised. The former term may properly be said to indicate the content and aim of a drama, the latter, its garb and occasion; but

[1] See Ward, *E. Dram. Lit.*, I, 106, and Courthope, *Hist. Eng. Poetry*, I, 415–417.

[2] See my *Rep. Engl. Com.*, lv-lvi, from which this paragraph and most of the next are taken.

the essential characters of the moral play (the human hero and the representatives of good and evil contending for his soul) may be common to "interlude" and "morality" alike; and both terms may with justice refer to the same drama. After 1500, the rôle of hero is, to be sure, sometimes filled by an historical character, or by one or more concrete personages representative of a type; but it must not be supposed that the play possessing such a hero is therefore to be called an interlude, for similar heroes are to be found in the morals before 1500. Nor should the statement be accepted that morals are distinguished from interludes by the presence in the former of both Devil and Vice; for several interludes of a later date have both Devil and Vice, while some of the earlier morals, written before 1500, have but one or the other of these characters, or neither.[1] The attempt to characterise the moral by its professed didactic intent, and the interlude by the lack thereof, or by the profession of mirth, is equally unavailing; for the manifest moral the *Pride of Life*, one of the earliest extant, makes explicit promise in its prologue "of mirth and eke of kare" from "this our game;" while *Mankind*, a moral of 1461 to 1485, which advertises no amusement, is as full of it as any late interlude. On the other hand, several plays written after 1568, calling themselves "comedies or enterludes," and promising brevity and mirth, are tedious. But, for the advertisement, sub-title, or specification of the play, we must of course hold the publisher and not the author generally responsible.

The common misapprehension that "moralities" were succeeded by "interludes" is probably due in large part

[1] *Wisdom* has only Lucifer; *Nature* has only Sensuality and minor Vices; *Pride of Life* had Devils in all probability, but no Vice, for Mirth is not one; *Everyman* has neither.

to the fact that the "interlude" had been used in England at different periods for entirely different kinds of entertainment, some of which, notably that to which Collier restricted the term, were of later production than the moral. Not all, however, for the term had been in use from a date preceding the first mention of the moral play, which in fact the "interlude" ultimately absorbed into itself. From 1300 and probably earlier, the term "interlude" seems to have been used as a synonym for singing and music, probably also for shows presented during the pauses of banquets. In the last years of Edward I's reign, perhaps as early as 1300, the word was employed for a dramatised anecdote of the type of the French or Italian farce: *Hic incipit Interludium de Clerico et Puella.*[1] The only extant copy of this, according to Wright and Halliwell,[2] is written in a hand of the beginning of the fourteenth century, and the title would appear to be contemporary with the rest of the manuscript. The language is English of a decided dialect, according to ten Brink[3] the South Northumbrian, and it appears to be the earliest extant specimen of its kind. A fragment, moreover, of a Cornish farce of the same century has been preserved in the *Révue Celtique*,[4] and there is little doubt that farce interludes abounded at the banquets of sovereigns and nobles from 1300 down. It is, in fact, more probable than not that they may be traced to the dramatic dialogue of the Anglo-Norman *jongleurs*. The performers of these interludes were probably professional from an early date; but the name *interludentes* does not occur until the reign of Edward IV, when it is used both for

[1] Ward, I, 237.
[2] *Reliquiæ Antiquæ*, I, 145.
[3] *Engl. Lit.*, II, 1, 295.
[4] IV, 259.

strolling companies and for professional players attached to the household of a magnate.

As a synonym for miracles themselves, the name "interlude" is used before the end of the fourteenth century in the well-known *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*. Speaking against sacred plays, the author says "how thanne may a prist pleyn in entirlodis;" and that these "entirlodis" are both biblical miracles and saints' plays is evident, for he specifies those "miraclis" that "Crist dude heere in erthe, outher in hymsilf outher in hise seyntis," and again by name, the plays of *Antichrist*, *Doomsday*, the *Passion*, the *Crucifixion*.[1]

But this author does not restrict the word "interlude" to a serious miracle. He may have had in mind, when he inveighs in the same treatise against "japyng" interludes, the *Mak* and the *Judicium* of the Wakefield master, or such exhibitions as that indicated in the margin of the Chester play of the *Three Kings* (one of the oldest of the cycle, "The Boye and Pigge when the Kinges are gone," or a scene like that, of late insertion, between the "tavernere" and the devils in Chester XVIII., or worst of all some mockery of the ritual. There is, however, only slender proof that in England the farce interlude was "commonly introduced between the acts of long mystery plays." This statement, which one finds in the *New English Dictionary*, applies rather to France. In England the word "interlude," when used with reference to the "mysteries," indicated not merely a diversion, but a kind of "mystery" play itself.

The word is next used for a brief farce or dramatic story introduced between the parts of a long moral play, like the interlude of the *Pauper and the Pardoner* in the *Thrie*

[1] *Rel. Antiq.*, II, 42.

Estaitis, 1440; and finally we find it applied, in 1504, not to a farce, but to an imposing allegorical drama, Skelton's *Nigramansir*, which called itself a "moral enterlude and a pithie," and was an excellent satire. In 1514 we learn that two morals (written by Medwall and Cornish) were acted under the name of interludes before Henry VIII. Some eight years later, Wynkyn de Worde printed as a "proper new interlude" an unalloyed moral, *Mundus et Infans*, which had been written about 1500; and before 1538 various other out-and-out morals, such as Medwall's *Nature*, although written maybe as early as 1486, and the *Four Elements*, composed 1517 to 1519, and *Magnyfycence*, 1515 to 1523, are published under the same seductive and fashionable designation. No matter how serious, they are all "enterludes," "goodly" or "newe and mery."

During these latter years the name is also appropriately applied to the descendants of the old *Interludium* cultivated by Heywood and undoubtedly by others, first as the "mery play," then as the "newe and very mery enterlude," — synonyms, in this case, for a *dêbat* like the *Wether*, or for a brief dramatic sketch presenting social types and concrete characters in a fable which, at any rate, was unified and spicy, if not comprehensive or profound, — a farcical or a satirical comedy, in short, whose aim, as Heywood said, was "not to teach but to touch." In 1530 Palsgrave defines "interlude" as *moralité*, and from that date on, the designation "interlude" is applied to allegorical plays of all kinds, long or short, lively or dull: moral, like the *Disobedient Child*, acted 1560 to 1561; pedagogical, like *Witte and Wisdome*, written between 1547 and 1553; politically controversial, like *Respublica* of 1553, or doctrinally, like *Newe Custome*, printed in 1573; "godly

and mirthful," after the fashion of *Like Will to Like*, printed 1568; or scriptural, instructive and concrete, like Wager's *Mary Magdalene* of 1567. As early as 1538 we find the term used by Bishop Bale for morals and artificial miracle plays which he also somewhat indifferently designated tragedies and comedies. In 1567 it is applied by the printer to the half-classical, half-moral tragedy of *Horestes;* and in 1568 it appears on the title-page of a "neue, mery and wittie comedie" out of scripture, the *History of Jacob and Esau.*

As a synonym for "comedy," somewhat, indeed, in the modern sense, "enterlude" occurs as early as the years adjoining 1520 to 1530: for instance, to designate the "newe comodie in maner of an enterlude" of the story of *Calisto and Melibœa.* In his *Governour*, 1531, Sir Thomas Elyot speaks of "entreludes" as if they were the English equivalent of the classical comedy; and again, in Cooper's *Dictionary* (edition of 1559), which was a revision of Elyot's older work "Comœdia," that is, the classical comedy, is defined as an "enterlude wherein the common vices of men and women are apparently declared in personage."[1] In this sense "enterlude" is employed by Udall for his "comedie" in the fashion of Plautus and Terence. Indeed after 1550, the tendency among the learned seems to have been to regard this term as a synonym for the play yielding mirth, felicity, and recreation, as opposed to the tragedy. Such a distinction is made by Puttenham, for instance, in his *Art of Poetry*, 1589; and in *Marprelate* of 1588, *Gammer Gurton* is called a "proper enterlude." From that time until Collier, in 1831, restricted the term to plays like Heywood's, the

[1] For references to Elyot and Cooper I am indebted to Professor Flügel.

EVERYMAN

From "Everyman: A Moral Play"

name "interlude" stood for any humorous and popular play.

These conclusions proceed from a study of the Morals produced while Miracles and Marvels were still in their prime. Between these earlier and the later moral plays, however, Mr. Pollard thinks that there is a real distinction. He therefore gives separate treatment to those written before 1500 (inclusive of *Everyman* and the *World and Child*), which are "concerned with issues that touch the whole of human nature . . . the whole of a man's life in its relation to its eternal issues," and the later plays of the kind, "moral, educational and controversial, that deal with mere fragments of men's life."[1] The latter, according to him, are inferior in quality and, as the name "interlude" would imply, are shorter, easier of acting, and of a trivial nature. He further distinguishes the two kinds by saying that "in the morality proper" (*i. e.*, the earlier moral) "the Vice has no part. But when the desire was felt for some humorous relief in the didactic interludes, a character probably dressed in the traditional garb of the domestic fool was introduced and obtained great popularity." Mr. Pollard regrets that most of the popular ideas about morality plays have been derived from plays of this latter kind. It appears to me, however, that the confusion, if any, has been caused by just such attempts to distinguish arbitrarily between plays as earlier and later, longer and shorter, which in essential method were alike; that is, were allegorical. That some of the morals produced before 1500 were of imposing dimensions is true; *Perseverance*, for instance, had some 3500 lines. Still these dimensions are insignificant when compared with those of contemporary *moralités* in France.

[1] *Eng. Miracle Plays*, liii.

De la Chesnaye's *Condemnation des Banquets* (1507) exceeded 3500 verses; *Bien-Avisé*, acted in 1439, reached 8000; and these are as pygmies beside *l'Homme pécheur* and *l'Homme juste*[1] of the period of Louis XII, which boast respectively, 22,000 and 30,000 lines. The long or short of an English moral is a trifling *differentia*, at the best. But when we come to compare English morals written before 1500 with those written after, we find no great difference in length after all. *Nature*, written before 1500, has 2860 lines. *Respublica*, as late as 1553, has 2000 odd. The *Conflict of Conscience*, 1581, stretches itself to the number of 2200, long ones at that. *Jacob and Esau*, licensed 1557, has 2400 lines; and if my memory serves me the moral interlude of *Longer thou Livest* and Wager's *Mary Magdalene* are of the same proportions as *Nature*, or perhaps greater. On the other hand, before 1522, when according to the fashion of the day Wynkyn de Worde printed the *World and the Child* as a "proper new interlude," although it was an old-fashioned moral that had been written some twenty years earlier, — before 1522, I say, several similar allegorical dramas had existed which were as brief as many of the kind afterward produced. *Everyman*, written about 1500, which calls itself in the prologue a "morall playe," has only 700 lines and is shorter than most of the succeeding interludes so called; the moral play *Mankynd*, 1461 to 1485, has only 900 lines, and the 500 lines remaining of the *Pride of Life*, one of the earliest of morals, would appear to be fully one-half of the whole. The *World and the Child* itself has but 1000 lines; whereas many later morals called new, pretty, and short interludes are anywhere from one-half again to twice as long.

[1] Petit de Julleville, *Comédie*, p. 79, etc. ; Creizenach, *s.* 471.

DEATH

From "Everyman: A Moral Play"

To discriminate between the older and the later morals or moral interludes by attributing to the former a broader scope or deeper spiritual significance, is likewise of no avail. Of the older set, *Mankind*, for instance, does not represent the "whole of a man's life in its relation to its eternal issues;" and if the *Pride of Life* and *Everyman* touch the whole of human nature, they do so merely in the moment of death. The later plays, on the other hand, can by no means be collectively characterised as representing "mere fragments of man's life." Moros, of the *Longer thou Livest*, runs a protracted human career; so do the characters of *The Nice Wanton*, and they touch as well most of the moral possibilities. Skelton's "goodly enterlude and mery" of *Magnificence* (about 1520) and Lyndsay's *Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* (acted 1540) may, perhaps, be called specialisations of the problem, but they afford as profound and extensive a treatment of vital issues as most of the extant morals of the century that preceded. The latter of these is a "proper" enough "morality" to contain within itself an interlude, specifically so called, existing purely to exemplify the lesson of the whole. The *Thrie Estaitis* advances, to be sure, the technique of comedy by the employment of concrete characters, but the improvement is one of degree, not of kind; it is a moral as undiluted as the *Pride of Life*, written maybe a hundred years before.

The reduction in the number of actors, as I have elsewhere said,[1] the abbreviation of the play, the concentration of the plot, wherever these exist in the later morals or moral interludes, are not evidence of a change of kind, but merely of its natural permutation through a period of some two hundred years. When ten Brink tells us

[1] *Rep. Engl. Com.*, lvi.

that the interlude was the species best adapted to further the development of dramatic art, we must understand him to mean the individual as opposed to the collective drama, or the occasional performance by professionals for the delectation, and sometimes at the order, of private parties, as opposed to expository or perfunctory plays, plays collaborated by crafts, or associated with times, places, and ends external to art. The improvement in scope and elasticity which marks the individual play is due to various causes; to patronage, for instance, which prefers amusement to instruction and the work of artists to that of journeymen; to the development, accordingly, of a bread-and-butter profession of acting, and to the accompanying *stimuli* of necessity and opportunity. Poetic invention, dramatic constructiveness and style, are sometimes spurred by hunger; they are always responsive to the appreciation of the cultivated, and may be to the reward.

CHAPTER XXII

SOME OF THE OLDER MORALS

EXAMINATION of the older morals, those that were produced before 1520, reveals, even though the period is comparatively early, a twofold character of composition. We find on the one hand plays interpretative of the ideals of life and constructive in character, relying upon the fundamentally allegorical and making principally for a didactic end. We find on the other hand plays that deal with the actual, appear to have a critical purpose, and consequently reproduce life and manners. These tend, not so much toward the ideal in purpose as toward the amusing and satirical.

Of the half dozen morals before 1520 that made for the development of a drama which by allegorical means should interpret ideals and construct characters, one of the earliest (about 1400) and most important was the *Castell of Perseverance*. In its use of virtues and vices as dramatic figures it sustains a close relation to the Digby *Magdalene*. *The Pride of Life*,[1] a moral of perhaps as high antiquity as the preceding, is interesting, not so much for its lofty and ideal conception as for the excellence with which it portrays ingenuous and fundamental

[1] The text would call for the title *King of Life*; but Mr. James Mills, who discovered the play, and described it, April 13, 1891, to the Royal Irish Academy, has named it as above. It is reprinted by Brandl, *Quellen des Weltlichen Dramas in England vor Shakespeare, 1898*.

types of character, and conducts a plot straightforward, tragic and severe, the natural outgrowth of premises common to the play and to a contemporary view of life. In place of the comic in character and episode, the play presents us with a Nuncius, called Mirth or Solas, who sits upon the king's knee, flatters him and sings. While this figure bears a resemblance, indeed, to the court fool, as Professor Brandl has said, he appears to me more nearly related to the herald of the miracle plays. I should not think that he could be in any way regarded as the forerunner of the Vice,[1] if it were not that the appellation "Solas" appears to have been appropriated by that personage in some later plays. The next of these morals of ideal purpose, *The Wisdom that is Christ* (1480 to 1490), is a comedy in the mediæval sense of the term insomuch as it portrays the ultimate triumph of the hero in the contest with evil. The plot is allegorical, but the language and philosophy of the play are direct and practical: the guise and behaviour of Lucifer, the gallant, and Will, the debauchee, are of mundane flavour, and allusions to contemporary manners and localities, "Holborn, Powlys" and the like, abound. On the whole the play makes, however, for the advancement of creative ideality; and in particular for the evolution of a species of drama which Udall, Lyly and others were soon to bring to some degree of perfection, the masque. For within the limits of artificial drama like this, it is into the masque that the continual recourse to "disguising,"

[1] *Quellen* s. XV. Cf. Solas, in an Interlude of 1540–1547, described by Halliwell from the MS. copy of the notes (Supp. Dods. O. Pl. II, *Wit and Wisedome*, p. 66) — and Sandy Solas, a vice-like figure in Lyndesay's *Three Estates*, 1540, upon which the MS. copy just referred to would seem to have been based.

almost the only device in this play, naturally ripens; while within the field of the romantic play the same device will mature into the comedy of intrigue.

In spite of a vivid satirical scene in which the lewd life and manners of Holborn, Westminster and Eastcheap are described by Folly, the Vice of the play, the proper, new Interlude of *Mundus et Infans*, printed in 1522, but written perhaps by the beginning of the century, manifestly continues the allegorical and didactic purpose of its kind. To the variety of dramatic means and methods it adds nothing, but to the inherent technique of comedy it makes a twofold contribution: a representation, crude to be sure, but laudable, of a sequence of changes in the character of the hero, and a pleasing iteration of crises in the conduct of the plot; the former of these potential in the nature of the moral play, the latter essential to the differentiation of the comic movement from that of the tragedy. While the ideal purpose of the moral is nominally prosecuted in the next play of this series, the "goodly interlude and mery" of *Magnyfycence*, composed by Skelton between 1515 and 1523, the play is more significant for "the vigour and vivacity of diction" to which Dr. Ward has already called attention, than for its allegorical treatment of "Vaynglory" and its somewhat mechanical attempts at comic realism. I wish that we could still consider at first hand another play of the same poet, *The Nigramansir*, written somewhat earlier, for by its attack upon ecclesiastical abuses it is said to have contributed much to the development of satirical comedy. But our knowledge of the play is indirect.[1]

[1] Warton, *History of English Poetry*, II, 360, describes it; but it has disappeared. The plot seems to have had nothing in common with Ariosto's *Negromante* of 1520, which is rather of the style of *The Bugbears* (1561-1584).

One character, Beelzebub the judge, is reported to have been not only the most clownish and concrete of devils up to date, but the mainspring of the play, and an important factor in the motivation of the plot.

In excellence of construction and stern nobility of purpose the *Moralle Playe of the Somonynge of Every-man* leaves all its contemporaries behind. The fable, as Dr. Percy has said, is conducted upon the strictest model of the Greek tragedy, and for severity it may be likened to the *Samson Agonistes*. It is justly called by Collier "one of the most perfect allegories ever formed," and by Ward, "the flower and crown of the literary species to which it belongs." Printed before 1531, but of uncertain date of composition,[1] it is of importance in the present survey as indicating the possibilities of a technique which, though dealing with abstractions, may imbue them with the interest of steady and progressive movement. It prepares the way, in other words, for the development of character other than the painfully pious or foolishly ludicrous, and for sober contemplation not only of the mortal issues but of the artistic possibilities afforded by them to the creative imagination. Like the moral plays of *Nature*, *Hyckescorner* and *Four Elements*, it dispenses with the Devil. It manages to get along also without any specified representative of the Vice, — unless Fellowship, Goodes, etc., may have been intended as such.

Besides these morals of constructive and ideal content there were a few written before 1520 that contributed to

[1] Collier and Brandl conjecture before 1483; Ward, a later date: his account of the Latin sources — perhaps the *Legenda Aurea* and *Speculum Historiale*, more surely the Barlaam and Jehoshaphat (1090) — is to be found in *Hist. E. Dr. Lit.*, I, 120. Logeman regards *Everyman* as a translation of the Dutch play *Elckerlijk* by Petrus Dorlandus.

Characters in "Hycke-Scorner"
From "The Ancient British Drama"

the comedy of real life. Three I have mentioned in the last paragraph; the other is called *Mankynd*. For a full description of them I must refer the reader to my *Representative English Comedies*.[1] Suffice it here to say that, though they pretend to a serious purpose, not one of them could have achieved success — and they were all successful without doubt — on any other basis than that of comic quality. *Mankynd* has its Vices and Devil, and its allegorical figures like Mercie and Myscheff; but the Devil is merry, the Vices are witty, the human characters interesting rascals and the Virtues a bore. The language savours more of the tavern than the tabernacle. This play was written between 1461 and 1485; the next, *Nature*, between 1486 and 1500. It was written by one of Archbishop Morton's chaplains, Henry Medwall, and displays a startling accuracy of information concerning the Bohemian purlieus or "tenderloin" of London. If it were n't for Medwall's sense of humour one might suspect him of more than altruistic and artistic interest in the slums. To the next of these "moral" interludes a Vice, Hyckescorner, gives his name. It was written between 1497 and 1512; and is more of a comedy, in dialogue and situation, in spite of occasional tediosities of spiritual pabulum, than the chaplain's play. *The Four Elements*, printed by its author, John Rastell, in 1519, tries to teach physics, but leaves in the memory an impression only of stale beer and tavern-wit, and tags of popular songs.

The older morals, whether serious or satirical, made, after all, a certain advance upon the usual technique of the miracles. They took their *dramatis personæ* not from books but out of life. And though they called these char-

[1] Pp. lvii–lxi.

acters by abstract or generic names they tried to distinguish each from the rest by a motive of action. The more the motive lived the more the character grew. This kind of play is, therefore, the forerunner of Ben Jonson's comedy of humours. It offered scope to the imagination, as well as the observation, of the dramatist : the more he forgot his pedagogic purpose the more his characters came to be like persons, his manners to be contemporary, and his plot vital and inwardly propulsive, possessed of the elasticity, novelty and finality requisite to art.

CHAPTER XXIII

LESS-KNOWN SURVIVALS OF THE MORAL INTERLUDE

THE farces and romantic interludes, concluding with the earliest of our plays of romantic intrigue, the *Calisto and Melibaea*, "caused to be printed" by John Rastell, about 1530, and the school interludes which characterised the period between the older morals and the first regular dramas, I have described at such length in my *Beginnings of English Comedy*, that it is not necessary to consider them here. It may be said, however, that of the school plays the most important to the development of English drama were the "Mirth" interludes, like the *Thersytes;* the "Wit" interludes, like *The Contract of a Marriage between Wit and Wisdome*, and a revision of some ten years' later date, *The Marriage of Witte and Science*, both of them marked by rapidity of movement, diversity of persons and naturalness of conversation ; the "Youth" interludes, which reach their climax in the *Interlude of Youth;* and finally the "Prodigal Son" plays, which were patterned upon *Terence* and certain Dutch school plays after the fashion of the *Acolastus* of Gnapheus, 1529. The best examples of the English interlude of the "Prodigal" are *The Nice Wanton* and *The Disobedient Child*. The period of these school plays was from 1530 to 1553.

About the time that the first regular dramas were written, — polytypic, or fusion, dramas like *Ferrex and*

Porrex, *Roister Doister*, *The Historie of Jacob and Esau*, *Gammer Gurton*, *Misogonus*, *Damon and Pithias*, and *The Supposes*, — that is to say between 1545 and 1566, there were still coming to the birth a few interludes or morals of the older kind which I should like to describe because they are usually ignored in the lump, as if unworthy of attention in every particular. Though some of these belated morals were stupid, others have as much right to a place in literature as certain of their contemporaries which were more lucky in catching the eye of the early historian.

Controversial Plays

The stupidities among them I shall merely mention. They are controversial interludes: First, the "new enterlude of *Newe Custome*," an anti-Papist play which, though not printed till 1573, was produced about 1562 to 1563, and written perhaps as early as 1550 to 1553. It presents no novel dramatic feature save that, instead of the Vice, two rufflers appear, who supply the only humour in the disputation. The second of this series is a "mery Playe bothe pythy and pleasaunt" of *Albion Knight*,[1] a political fragment acted between 1560 and 1565. Though its subject is the ever-interesting dissension between the estates of the realm, and its rhetoric unusually blunt, it is not dramatically up to the level of *Respublica*. The element of concrete and personal interest is lacking; and the comic interest centers solely about the Vice, Injurie. He, with his "olde mate," Dyvysion, and their instruments, Double Devyce and Old Debate, forms the mischief-making group of the drama: a signally effective group, indeed, whose chief, a clever, disputatious and satirical personage, is the

[1] S. R. 1565-6. See also Collier, *H. Dram. Poetry*, II, 284.

mainspring of such action as appears. The controversial element is not far to seek in the third play of this division, a peculiarly insipid disputation called *Kyng Daryus*, printed in 1565. The Vice, Iniquytie, calls himself the son of the Pope, and, when discomfited, departs "to the south to seek his fortune." In spite of the coarse and feeble quality of the comic, a certain distinction attaches to the interlude because of its twofold thread of interest. The strands, however, lack all connection. Here, again, the Vice and his two associates, occupying the greater part of the production, dominate the play. Indeed, the Vice, influencing the major or the minor action, and sometimes both, and thus uniting the interests of the fable, has, during the years of which we have just treated, steadily progressed from a negative if not subordinate position to that of manipulator or comic individual as well as marplot. It will also be noticed that, while in the earlier moral plays the Vice's ridicule rebounds upon himself, because directed chiefly at individuals not obnoxious to ridicule but dignified and conscious of ultimate vindication, — in *Daryus* and plays of its like, he advances artistically as well as satirically. This is because here the Vice makes fun of the pretensions of his own worthless associates. Comedy has learned a lesson of social importance when she turns her weapons, at last, against those who are deservedly objects of derision or contempt. Somewhat more virile is the remaining play of this group. Like Bale's *King Johan*, the *Conflict of Conscience*, by Nathaniell Woodes, Minister in Norwich, presents a peculiar mixture of individual and historical characters with figures of mere abstraction. The real subject of this controversial drama, Francis Spiera, had committed suicide, about 1550, in remorse for his conversion to Roman

Catholicism. Woodes' play, though not published until 1581, was probably written soon after 1563.[1] It stands midway between the allegorical interlude and the drama of concrete experience, and at first sight seems worthy of the praise accorded to a worthy innovation. But it is not: for though the author makes a laudable profession of raising his subject from the particular to the universal, he succeeds only in theologising; and though he calls his production an "excellent new commedie," it is that only by virtue of the narrated repentance of the "apostate" before his death. Still there is something of originality and amusement in one or two of the episodes, and in the colloquies of the Vice and his associates. There is also a commendable realism in the portraiture of the priest, Caconos. With his Scottish dialect, and his portace illuminated to offset the imperfection of his reading faculty, he is, I think, the earliest burlesque of the ecclesiastical *ignoramus* in English comedy. The author shows skill in the development of his characters, and is betrayed, at times, into poetry of a technique and style almost as charming as that of the best portions of the *Mariage of Witte and Science.*

Artistic Variations of the Stock

Of the decadent stock of moralities and interludes, there are, as I have said, a few specimens, between the years 1553 and 1578, that exhibit a decided advance in quality, even if not in kind.[2] Three of these, *The Longer thou Livest, All for Money* and *Tyde Taryeth no Man*, Mr. Fleay[3] lumps together as simple instances

[1] When Sleidan's French account of Speira appeared in Geneva; Collier, in H. Dods. VI.

[2] *Rep. Engl. Com.*, lxxxvi, from which this paragraph is taken.

[3] *Hist. St.*, p. 66.

of the survival of the older "morality" after the introduction of tragedy and comedy on the models of Seneca and Plautus, and makes the further statement that none of them teaches us anything as to the historical development of the drama in England. With the utmost respect for the knowledge of this often helpful historian, I must say that as a matter of judgment, none of these dramas, least of all *Longer thou Livest*, should be classed with the moral plays of mere survival. While the authors of these and similar specimens did not produce a new kind, they did more than repeat the old. They revived and enriched the moral interlude by infusion of new strains, and so produced, by culture, a most interesting group of what may be called variations of the moral. To this class of morals belong also the *Triall of Treasure*, *Like wil to Like* and the *Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene*. It must be said also that a few moral tragedies of the period like R. B.'s *Apius and Virginia* (about 1563, printed 1575), and Preston's *King Cambises* (S. R. 1569 to 1570), have some claim to belong to this group, and that if there were space they should receive attention for their vital dramatic quality and their development of the character of the Vice. The Hap-hazard of the former far from being, as Dr. Ward has said, "redundant to the action," suggests the "conspiracie" which Apius adopts, and is the heart of rascality and fun; he is consequently a Vice of the old type ; but he is, also, the representative (in accordance with his name and express profession) of the caprice of the individual and the irony of fortune. He is the Vice, efficient for evil, but in process of evolution into the Inclinations or Humours of a somewhat later period of dramatic history: conceptions not immoral but unmoral, artistic impersonations of comic extravagance,

where Every Man is in his Vice, and every Vice is but a Humour. The Ambidexter of the latter tragedy plays "with both hands finely" in the main action, and at the same time serves to provoke the jocosity of those admirably concrete ruffians, Huf, Ruf and Snuf, and of the clown of the play. The *Horestes*,[1] written by John Pikerynge in 1567, must also be mentioned here. The Vice under his dual designation of Corage and Revenge is of the weathervane variety; and in realistic and humorous qualities the play closely resembles the preceding two. They were a noble but futile effort to bottle the juices of tragedy, classical-historical at that, in the leathers of moral interlude.

Of the comedy-interludes of this group the first in chronological order would appear to be *Tyde Taryeth no Man*. It was compiled by George Wapull and printed in 1576,[2] and calls itself a "commody right pythie and full of delight." Collier thinks that the character of the play indicates a considerably earlier date of authorship. The religious tone is of the established reformation, not at all controversial; but the references to the "Prince" (instead of Queen) can hardly be explained as abstract or generic. It therefore may have been written before 1553. While there is nothing new in the conception, and the unity of the plot lies entirely in the hands of the Vice, who devotes himself to illustrating the truth of the proverbial title, the movement is noteworthy because it develops no less than three parallel actions: the ruin of a

[1] Brit. Mus., C. 34. g; Collier's *Illustr. Old Engl. Lit.*, II, 2. Brandl's *Quellen*.

[2] Nothing known of Wapull. The play is in Br. Mus., C. 34. f. 45; also in Duke of Devonshire's Library. Repr. Collier, E. E. *Pop. Lit.*, Vol. II, London, 1863–64.

tenant by oppression, the failure of a courtier in his vain ambition, and the career of two prodigals, Wilfull Wanton and Wastefulness. The conclusion gathers these three threads into one, and metes out poetical justice to the *dramatis personæ*. In the first movement, the character of No-Good-Neighbourhood notably anticipates the Nychol-Know-the-Law of Lupton's *All for Money;* in the second, the hero, Willing-to-win-Worship, anticipates the Perin of *Knack to Know a Knave* and the Radagon of Greene and Lodge's *Looking Glass;* the third movement is a crude treatment of the Magdalene theme. The dramatic means are, like the conception, old; but the Vice and the local characters, tenaunt, debtor, courtier, prodigals, though generic, are concrete and well portrayed. Corage (Vice, marplot and jester), with his rollicking songs of the barge that he steers to hell, is the dramatic main-spring, the comic individual, if not the hero. The character of Furtheraunce, who makes his interest out of oppressor and oppressed alike, is conducted with no ordinary skill; likewise that of Greediness the landlord, — a forerunner of the Lucres, Overreaches and Suckdrys, who ends his days "in a great madnesse" and sails "with the tyde boat straight into Hell." The play, therefore, though a survival, is of cardinal importance since it combines motives sufficient for three kinds of moral interlude, suggests the drama of parallel action, and interweaves the comic and the grave, while it exemplifies abstract principles with a width of reach decidedly remarkable, by means of characters on the one hand native and social, on the other typical.

The "new and mery" interlude of *The Trial of Treasure*, printed 1567, but probably written some years before, is directed against the love of wealth, and is no

less didactic than its predecessors. But though confined within the usual limits of the moral interlude, it possesses characteristics of some novelty and promise. The serious and comic actions are consolidated, and the characters are arrayed in contrasted pairs, as in *Like will to Like* and *Damon and Pithias*. The saintly hero and heroine and their worldly counterparts are well portrayed. The Lady Trust is one of our earliest specimens of the gracious, highminded, and, still not impossible, woman ; and Just is an example, not quite so novel, but well intended, of the muscular Christian, unswerving in constancy. While the plot turns upon the relations of the worldly pair, those of the unworldly furnish the imagination with materials for a sequel. The characters are, generally speaking, concrete in action if not in name ; and especially life-like are the amusing, fat blackguard, Greedy-Gut, and the Vice, Inclination. The latter is distinctively of the mischief-making variety; he eggs on the victim, but also ridicules him in his embarrassment and prophesies his destruction. He does not deserve to be severely punished; and so the author merely "snaffles" him as one should snaffle any irresponsible, and as Porter, Shakespeare, Chapman and Jonson, in the coming age, snaffled the undue "humours" of their *dramatis personæ*.

In spite of Ulpian Fulwell's laudable attempt at riding two horses in the "very godly and mirthful enterlude intituled *Like wil to Like quod the Devel to the Colier*," he does not much impress us with the disaster to which his "ruffins and roisters are brought." The play was printed in 1568, but acted, Mr. Fleay thinks, as early as 1562.[1]

[1] Bodl. Malone, qto.; H. Dods. Vol. III. See Fleay, *Hist. St.*, pp. 59–61, for his theory of its connection with *Misogonus*, *Roister Doister*, and *Damon and Pithias*.

Though it is, in fact, little more than a farce, it acquires a certain distinction as one of the few interludes possessing both Devil and Vice, and the only play extant of the kind in which the latter is conveyed to hell by the former. Nichol Newfangle, comic hero as well as Vice, fulfils the purpose of the plot by pairing off characters of his kidney: Lucifer, with Grim the Collier, Tom Tosspot with Ralph Roister, Hankin Hangman with himself. The contrasted pairing of virtuous abstractions is also notable, for every such attempt at classification indicates a step forward in the analysis of character; but the shred of serious action itself is of slight importance beside the comic, and not affected by it. In this play, again, the Vice is the most important personage: his *rapport* with the audience, his skill in burlesque, — the liturgy to the Devil, and the sham court, — his repertory of comic tricks, mimicries and witty responses, distinguish him as one of the most varied and original of his class. In versatility he must be ranked with Idelness of the *Contract of Wit and Wisdome*. As mischief-maker, indeed, and consequently as motive force of the action, he is unusually inventive. The Vice of *The Trial of Treasure* seduces, and in Mephistophelian vein derides, the Nichol Newfangle of this play informs against his dupes as well, and even puts the halter round their necks when he can. Though he is roundly drubbed by two of them, and borne by Lucifer to the place where he belongs, he is treated rather as a source of merriment than as a vicious character. It is a grim kind of merriment, however, and must have impressed the spectators to an unusual degree with the irony of lawlessness, for of that Nichol is the incarnation.

The Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene,[1] by the learned clarke Lewes Wager, printed 1566, is an excellent example of dramatic experiment in the fusion of kinds. Based, as the author tells us, on *Luke* vii and viii, the indebtedness of the play to scriptural story is still but slight, and that only in the Second Part. Of the mediæval legend, which underlies the Digby *Magdalene*, no dramatic use is made. Under the disguise of the title, we discover a Protestant "new enterlude," of the prodigal, in many respects as natural and entertaining as *The Nice Wanton*, or the *Acolastus* of the continental humanist. Like all survivals of the decadent stock, it is furnished with the agencies of the moral interlude — the Vice and his accessories, all children of "Sathan," and the usual chorus of allegorical sermonisers, — but it moves in a rich environment of contemporary customs and costumes. Few plays of its date, and of a didactic purpose, present characters so well constructed and consistently developed. Mary, who enters "triflyng with her garmentes" and bewailing the misfit of her gown, is all the more convincing because not from the first an abandoned character. She is a demonstration of the proverb, Terentian in spirit, but enunciated by the Vice himself — *Puellæ pestis, indulgentia parentum.* She has merely not been disciplined. Her replies to the *double-entendres* of the seducer are unsophisticated and girlish. Infidelie gets the better of her, of course; but it is only gradually that she is in-

[1] Edited from the qto., probably unique, in the library of Mr. W. A. White, of New York, by Professor F. I. Carpenter (Publ. of Univ. Chicago Press) with excellent Introduction, Notes, and Glossary. Copies of a second edition, essentially a reissue of the 1566 but dated 1567, are to be found in Br. Mus., C. 34. e. 36. qto. Carpenter dates the composition as early as 1550, and Brandl 1547. But their reasons seem hardly conclusive.

structed in evil, and only by suffering and repentance that she is reformed. She is the most natural and interesting girl of dramatic fiction at the date of which we are speaking, — not saint, nor devil, nor abstraction, — a creature of flesh and blood, but of charm by no means only physical. She has a wit and a style. The conversations in which she figures are facile and vivid. Her companions are blackguards ; but the poet who imagined them holds her in poetic regard. She stirs him. There are few sprightlier songs in our early drama than the

Hoigh, Mistresse Mary, I pray you be mery, —

few heroines of whom we retain so clear a mental impression; her "pretie person," her "golden shyning haire," her " eyes as gray as glasse," her " smylyng countenance," —

Your lyps as ruddy as the redde Rose,
Your teeth as white as ever was the wales bone
So cleane, so swete, so fayre, so good, so freshe, so gay.

The author has devised his First Part with such cunning that his audience could not but sit through the scriptural and doctrinal moral of the Second; if for no other reason than to discover whether the winsome lass should by any chance fail to be justified by faith.[1] The varied qualities of this play had inclined me to place it in the group called polytypic; but since, like the play which we shall next consider, it is historically important rather as fusing different species of the didactic type into one than as attempting to assimilate the type to the wholly secular farce, comedy of intrigue, romance and the like, the present arrangement seems the more satisfactory.

[1] The author became Rector of Garlickhithe, March 28, 1560. Carpenter, *Introd.*, p. xiv.

Collier dates the "very merry and pythie Commedie called *The Longer thou Livest, the more Foole thou Art*," newly compiled by W. Wager[1] (probably a relative of Lewis), soon after 1558.[2] The limits of its publication, however, are 1567 to 1594; and Mr. Fleay's surmise of 1571 to 1576 as the period of writing is, I think, confirmed by the passage in the play which begins

> God preserve London, that noble citie
> Where they have taken a godly ordre for a truth.

This probably refers to some of the "Orders" or the "Remedies" concerning stage performances proposed, 1575 to 1576, by the Lord Mayor and Corporation, and indicates that W. Wager was in sympathy with the repressive policy of the Common Council.

The title-page and prologue indicate that this "commedie" combines the purposes of the "youth" and "wit" interludes: to portray "such as had lever to Folly and Idlenes fall." The plot itself presents in addition features of the "prodigal" play, like the *Nice Wanton* ("as one bringeth up his children . . . so shall he have them"), and of the moral-history of man's career, like *Mundus et Infans*. In addition to all this, opportunity is taken to root out Antichrist. The play, therefore, combines qualities of some half-dozen kinds of moral interlude; and this it does with a skill and vivacity displayed by few of

[1] Qto. in Br. Mus., C. 34, e. 37, Hunter (*Chorus Vatum Anglicanorum*, Br. Mus. 24, 491, Add. MSS. 24, 491, p. 90) conjectures the identity of W. Wager with Dr. W. Gager of Oxford, who is put down by Meres as "among the best for comedy"; but if the play was written before 1576, it is not likely that Wager was Gager, for the latter did not *enter* Christ Church till 1574, and would presumably have been too young for such a composition as this.

[2] Halliwell says 1568–9; Hazlitt, 1581.

its predecessors. The leading character, Moros, whose songs hang together like "fethers in the winde," must not be mistaken for a Vice. His companions, Idleness, Incontinence and their set are self-confessed Vices, and they endow him with the insignia of that rôle, but he is still designated "as starke an Idiot as ever bore bable"; and it is as such that he is finally provided with the fool's coat and, as a fool, not a Vice, borne by Confusion to the Devil. He is what his name implies, a cross between Vice and Fool, and on this account, is historically a most instructive character: a concrete figure in whom qualities of Vice, waggish knave, and counterfeit-simple or crank, are manifest in transition toward the rôle of jester and comic hero. The interlude is, in several other respects, interesting: the *animus* is anti-Papist, the conception academic; but the social environment, as of the hero's *ménage*, with its Sir Anthony Arrogant, auditor, — Gregory Gorbely, the goutie, — Nicholl Never-thrift, the notary, — and Nell and Nan of the "thackèd house," — is, after all, of appropriate native quality. The life of the piece lies mostly in the "footes" of songs and the songs themselves decantated by the hero, — "I have a pretty titmouse come pricking on my to," and the rest — a device which however was not new. Rastell, in the *Four Elements*, and I suppose many another since then, had used it. Beside the suggestion of "humours" in the list of the Fool's officials, and the peculiarities already mentioned, the play does not much advance the methods of comedy. In some details, as of diction and doctrine, it resembles the *Magdalene* of Lewis Wager; maybe in versatility of comic power it excels that play. So Professor Carpenter maintains. But in other qualities, — in lyric touch, ease of dialogue, and general technique,

and in the artistic relish of naughtiness, — William Wager's dramatic output cannot compare with that of Lewis.

Another belated, and therefore unconsidered, specimen of the "prodigal son" play is the "tragical comedy entituled *The Glasse of Government*," by George Gascoigne. Though not printed until some fifteen years after the publication of the principal dramas of its class — *The Nice Wanton* and *The Disobedient Child* — this play is at once the most representative and original of English attempts to connect for the stage "Terentian situations with a Christian moral in a picture of school life." The best known English interludes of the prodigal son were patterned after continental models of the early sixteenth century, the *Asotus* of Macropedius and his *Rebelles*, the *Studentes* of Stymmelius, and especially the *Acolastus* of Gnapheus, which, through Palsgrave's English translation of 1540, exerted a long enduring influence. Earlier still, before the close of the fifteenth century, the ideal of the Christian Terence school had found expression in French *moralités*, — the *Bien-Avisé et Mal-Avise*, *les Enfants de Maintenant* and so forth. From some of its continental and most of its English predecessors, Gascoigne's play is distinguished by the fact that it is a Calvinistic, not Roman Catholic, adaptation of the humanist experiment of instruction by the stage, and that instead of Latin or English verse it uses (like the author's early comedy, *The Supposes*) plain vernacular prose. The plot, too, of *The Glasse of Government* is fresh and vigorous, and I think, original. The value of the play is further enhanced by its double ending; it is a genuine "tragical comedy," for while the righteous are rewarded, the ungodly reap the wages of their sin.

A last survival of the older stock remains to consider: *All for Money*, written by T. Lupton, and published in 1578.[1] It calls itself a "moral and pitieful Comedie"; but of the pathos most pitifully fails. It is a morality for grown-ups; Protestant, but not markedly controversial. Collier refuses it the title of comedy, but it surely deserves some such credit for the comedy-plot, though in skeleton, by which it illustrates the influence of avarice upon the interests and classes of society. Again, as in the *Tyde* and other plays already noticed, we find that the plot is controlled by a Vice, who manipulates both threads of popular interest, the mischievous and the comic; but that the minor characters and episodic movements all tend to establish the thesis of the main and moral action. This play, late as it was written, rejoices in a "Sathan" as well. The dramatic success, if any, was achieved in spite of the allegorical machinery and figures: the *Learning With-Money*, *Learning Without-Money*, *etc.* — also in spite of the commonplace humour — the humour of dress, of horse-play, of abuse, of puerile epigram and indecency. The dramatic advance consists in the local flavour of the characters, the careful and still varied reproduction of contemporary life: William with-the-Two-Wives, for instance, who would "rather have lesse," Nicholl-never-out-of-Lawe, Sir Lawrence Livingless, the priest who "knows not how many planets, but knows how many cards he has when he has played seven," old Mother Croote, with her complaint of the "holsom yong man of twenty year old and three," who has deserted her for a poorer, younger, more enticing wench. The personages speak in accordance with their

[1] Bodley, *Malone*, 163, qto.; repr. Halliwell, *Pop. Lit., XVI and XVII Cents.*, London, 1851.

characters; the Vice no longer directs his wit and his machinations against individuals too sincere or commonplace to be ridiculous; the satire has a definite aim and makes for it. Altogether T. Lupton's play has more merit than some of its *genus* that are better known. In common with all these less-known morals its main demerit is that it was born too late.

They served a purpose in the development of the drama, these posthumous plays of qualities incarnate; they promoted the habit of psychological analysis; they quickened the observation of the dramatist, his conjectural faculty, his skill in plot-invention; they whetted the appetite of the public for the tragedy of characters and the comedy of humours, — the art of Marlowe, Kyd, and Shakespeare, of Robert Wilson, Jonson, Dekker, and Chapman; the expression of abstract vice in vicious personality, of abstract folly in social environment and human caprice.

CHAPTER XXIV

SOME LESS-KNOWN FORERUNNERS OF ROMANTIC COMEDY

Between 1560 and 1590 the drift of the drama was setting steadily away from the useful and toward the pleasant. Of the ingredients of romantic comedy, some such as love and ideal devotion had already found a place in the interlude as early as 1530. The inspiration of the *Calisto and Melibaea* is continued in the romantic friendship of *Damon and Pithias* (1563–1565), and the intrigues of *The Supposes* which was acted in 1566. Phases of the marvellous and of the heroic had appeared in saints' plays and school interludes; but there the didactic purpose had generally managed to overshadow entertainment. Now the theatre-goer began to revel in representations of chivalry and sentimental love, pomp, adventure, necromancy, and intrigue, the ironies of fortune and the charities of mirth, — in short, the social comedy of humour and romance.

The dramas of Edwardes and Gascoigne, and, of course, of the great forerunners of Shakespeare are known to all. About a few of the less-known predecessors of the romantic comedy I should like to say a word.

Of plays which dramatise the adventures of amorous knights and distressed ladies, — folk-lore romances as Mr. Fleay calls them, — the first to challenge our atten-

tion is "the pleasant comedie of *Common Conditions*," [1] written perhaps between 1572 and 1576, and probably the same that is entered in the stationers' registers on July 26 of the latter year. Mr. Fleay assigns both this play and *Sir Clyomon*, which will next be considered, to R(ichard) B(ower), the author of *Apius and Virginia*. Certainly the conception of the servitor, Conditions, who combines the mischief-making characteristics of the real Vice with qualities of the parasite and domestic fool, is somewhat the same as that of Haphazard in R.B.'s play (about 1563). "Which ever way the wind blowes, it is for the commoditie" of this "crafty counterfeit knave"; and, like Haphazard again, the "turne coat" of this play would seem to represent the shifting ironies of fortune. A peculiar figure is Conditions, paralleled, after all, only by the marplot of the somewhat similar "semi-epical comedy of romantic adventure," *Sir Clyomon*. In spite of its crude attempt at emotional display and its rambling nightmare of a plot, the play of *Common Conditions* has indubitable merit. I have already said that it escapes the didactic ; it is notable also for its devotion to the excitements of adventure, its fresh situations and sentimental loves, its romantic geography, its range of events, of social classes and typical characters, and for its introduction of a phenomenon found in but few earlier plays, — such as the *Melibaea*, — the heroine ecstatically romantic and still in no respect ridiculous. This play presents us with heroines not kept in the background as in the Italian-Terentian comedy of intrigue — like *The Suppoſes*, but prominent in wit and interest, and easily on

[1] Duke of Devonshire's library ; Rpr. Brandl. *Quellen*. Malone says, in his transcript of the play (Bodl. *Malone*, Ms. 36.) that it was printed about the year 1570.

a level with the two heroes of the story. The outcome is parallelism and contrast of the pairs of lovers, and a fairly executed double plot. The "somewhat femininative" Clarisia, Lomia the "natural," and the love-lorn Sabia are promising contributions to the gallery of romantic portraiture. But the characterisation of all these figures is inferior to that of Conditions himself, who, though he may fall asleep "while lifting his legge over a stile," is wider awake in quip and knavery than any preceding marplot of English comedy. Tinkers and Gilbertian pirates, also, stand out rollicking, farcical, but actual and dramatic. Certain resemblances, which may of course be temporaneous or accidental, might be pointed out between this play and *The Two Italian Gentlemen*, especially in respect of style, the peculiar blend of humour and romance, and the conversational and lyrical qualities in each. That *Common Conditions* had some vitality appears from Kirkman's mention of it in his catalogue of 1661.[1]

A considerably greater prominence was achieved by its companion-piece, the history of *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes*, printed in 1599, but acted between 1587 and 1594,[2] and maybe written not long after *Common Conditions*. Although *Sir Clyomon* lacks perspective, local, logical, or chronological, it is not without humour or dramatic inventiveness. It strains after novelty and revels in surprise. Like our old friends, Conditions, Haphazard and Ambidexter, the marplot of the play, one Subtle Shift, illustrates the dramatic transition from the portrayal of versatile Vice to that of fickle Fortune, — an effort con-

[1] Collier's account of the play is inaccurate; and I do not see how Brandl makes out that Lomia is Conditions in disguise.

[2] See Fleay's *Hist. St.*, p. 89; *E. Dr.*, II, 296. The attributions to Peele and to Wilson lack confirmation; while the conjecture of R. B.'s authorship is not convincing, although suggestive.

genial to comedy. We are regaled by the presence of a heroine disguised as a page, of an enchanter and his dragon, and of diversified monsters, puppets and paraphernalia, borrowed from the jurisdiction of the *Faery Queene*. It is of just such folk-lore extravaganzas, *Islands of Strange Marshes* and *Forests of Marvels*, that Peele makes sport in his nearly contemporaneous *Old Wives Tale*.

For his recent edition of the manuscript of one of the earliest comedies of intrigue of the period which we are considering, we are indebted to Dr. Carl Grabau. The author of this play, *The Bugbears*,[1] is unknown. If we trust the evidence of the versification, it was written before 1584; according to other evidence, certainly after 1561. It is a "contamination" of Grazzini's *La Spiritata*, and of *Gl' Ingannati*. It revives the secret marriage of the *Andria*, the buried treasure of the *Trinummus* and the ghost of the *Mostellaria*. I find the style of considerable interest and the plot dramatically handled. The father of Formosus will not consent to his marriage with Rosimunda unless she bring a dower of three thousand crowns. But Rosimunda is poor; and her lover has resort to a strategem. With the assistance of a pseudo-necromancer he frightens his close-fisted sire out of the house by a pretended obsession of ghosts (the bugbears), and steals from the paternal coffers the money necessary to the contract. A subplot somewhat enhances the interest. The translator has here and there made slight insertions; the lyrical passages and the phraseology of the necromancer and the servants are distinctly English in flavour.

[1] Br. Mus., Landsdowne MSS., Vol. 807; Rpr. *Archiv. d. n. Sprachen*, Bde. 97, 98.

This burlesque of witchcraft is found subservient to a plot of nascent humours and romantic passion in still another play that deserves a closer degree of attention than has hitherto been vouchsafed it. This is A. M.'s *Fidele et Fortunio*,[1] entered to Hackett for publication in 1584 as "*Fedele et Fortuna*, the Deceipts in Love discoursed in a Commedia of ii Italyan gentlemen," comedy of domestic intrigue, like *The Supposes*, and like it a translation. Though the production is fettered by rhyme, the plot is as entertaining and novel as any of that date, even the *Campaspe* or the *Sapho*, both printed in 1584. The romance anticipates the circuitous infatuations of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Virginia loves Fidele, who loves Victoria, who loves Fortunio, who loves Attilia (Victoria's maid). And about this lady's maid the business also of lower life centres; for Pedante, the parasite disguised as schoolmaster, and Crackstone, the swashbuckler (who once sold butter and cheese to the camp but now is "captain"), are rivals for her favour. The intrigues are embellished by songs of no ordinary charm; indeed Fidele's under Victoria's window "I serve a mistress whiter than the snow," foretells from afar Browning's sweetest in the *Blot i' the 'Scutcheon*. But, all in all, the interest of the action is in the common characters: Attilia noticeably, and Medusa whose witchcraft aids to interweave the threads of the play. The latter is of the lineage of Celestina; she is a worthy contemporary of Mother Bombie, and a forerunner of the go-betweens

[1] Probably Anthony Munday. Selections are given in Halliwell's *Pop. Lit. XVI and XVII Cents.*, pp. 15 *et seq.* If, as seems likely, Nashe's allusion in *Have With You*, 1596 (Fleay, *E. Dr.*, II, 113), is to the Crackstone of the translation it is to be presumed that the play had been put upon the stage.

of Restoration comedy. The most characteristic figure, however, thoroughly English in his "humour" is Crackstone, — at one and the same time the Bobadil and Dogberry and male Slip-slop of the play. His concealment in the tomb, his terror at the "conjurations" of Medusa, his capture in the net, and his Xantippean baptism are admirable fooling. This play has various details of similarity with another of domestic intrigue and romantic plot called *The Weakest Goeth to the Wall*, acted, according to Mr. Fleay, about the same date, 1584 to 1587, and assigned by him to the same author, Anthony Munday. I think it quite likely that the author was that "Antonio Balladino," the "best plotter" of the day; and that he seized upon the story, exactly to his taste, with its young hero, its elopement, battles, disguises, discovery and reconciliation, not very long after it first appeared in Rich's *Farewell to the Military Profession*, 1581. The Dutch dialect is, however, of Dekker's quality and goes to confirm Dr. Ward's suggestion. Perhaps Dekker collaborated.

The "pleasant and stately morals" known as the *Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, *The Three Ladies of London*, and *The Three Lordes and Three Ladies of London* are a distinct advance upon other plays of this romantic kind. The latter two were written by Robert Wilson; and I have a shrewd suspicion that to him the first, also, may be attributed. They are the merging of moral interlude in romantic and social comedy; and consequently, though I have elsewhere described them in detail,[1] I cannot conclude this notice without a word of repetition concerning their quality. In them the "moral" arrives at a consciousness of the demands of art; and,

[1] *Repr. Engl. Com.*, lxxxviii-xci.

attempting to fulfil its possibilities, acquires body, spirit, and *bouquet*, even though, in the moment of fermentation, it bursts the ancient bottle. Still we must remember that we have reached the period, 1580 to 1590, in which most of the best work of Lyly, Marlowe, Peele, and Greene was produced; and we must, therefore, not attribute to Wilson an importance greater than that of an industrious and inventive contemporary, hospitable to ideas, but essentially conservative in practice. He is at once "father of interludes," as interludes then were regarded, and an intermediary between the interlude of moral abstractions and the comedy of humour and romance.

APPENDIX

A. Observations on the Sources of the Cycles

In the Chester cycle there are twenty-five plays.[1] The sources of some have already been indicated in our examination of legends like the Fall of Lucifer and the History of the Holy Rood. For dramas treating of pre-Christian subjects, the authorities in general are the Latin translation of the Bible by Jerome, known as the Vulgate, the *Historia Scholastica* of the twelfth-century French priest Peter Comestor, the *Cursor Mundi*, and a thirteenth-century version of the French *Mystère du Viel Testament*, the extant fifteenth century copy of which agrees in most matters of sequence and motive with the Chester. In some cases the playwrights of Chester seem to have gone straight to Josephus[2]; in others to early versions of the French *Mistère de la Nativité* and of the *Passion* of A. Greban, — elaborated into cycles in the fifteenth century. The *Mistère d'Adam* of the twelfth century may also have been used. In some cases, as, for instance, the account of a dream of things celestial and to come which Adam had while God was making Eve, a consideration of the context[3] shows that the Chester playwright drew not from the *Legenda Aurea* or the middle English *Genesis and Exodus*, but directly from their immediate source, the history of Comestor. The more remote originals of such traditions were, of course, Bede's Ecclesiastical History, Anglo-Saxon religious poems, the *De Spiritalis Historiae Gestis* of Bishop Avitus, the *Chronographia* of Syncellus, the fifth, or sixth, century *Book of Adam and Eve*, and its sources in apocryphal literature of Jewish origin — the *Books of Enoch* and

[1] The texts are Wright, *Chester Plays*, 2 vols., 1843, *Shakespeare Society*; and Deimling, 1893, Plays 1–13, *E. E. T. S.*

[2] *e. g.*, part of the *Balaam and his Ass.*

[3] Ungemach, *Quellen d. f. ersten Chester Plays*, pp. 51, 79.

of the *Jubilees*. St. Augustine and Gregory the Great were used both directly and indirectly. Comestor's account of Adam's dream borrows, indeed, the very words of Augustine.[1]

When the New Testament plays do not draw their narrative directly from the Vulgate, the *Cursor*, the *Legenda Aurea* or Peter Comestor, they turn to early versions of the French mysteries of the Conception, Nativity, Passion, and Resurrection, to mediæval legends, or to the Apocryphal New Testament.

The withering of Salome's hand because she had sacrilegiously touched the Virgin comes, for instance, originally from the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew; but it also bears a close resemblance to the fourteenth century *Miracle de la Nativité Nostre Seigneur*, where the names of the midwives correspond with those of the Chester. The story of the Magi owes much to the same Gospel and to the Pseudo-Chrysostom: it was developed in the middle ages into a long and romantic legend. The events attending the birth of Christ, where non-biblical, are derived from the Latin *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary*, and the Greek *Protevangel of James*. The sources of the *Play of Antichrist*, unique in the English Cycles, I have indicated in my account of that legend.

The fifteen signs that shall fall before the day of doom, which are recited in the play of *Ezekiel*, are referred directly to the authority of St. Jerome:

> The which were written on a row
> He found in book of Hebrew.

These signs are variously given in less known English poems,[2] as well as in the *Cursor*, the *Legenda Aurea*, and the *Historia Scholastica*, all of which claim Jerome as their source. The Chester play, however, follows the *Legenda*, and that Peter Comestor.

It is singular that neither of the main traditions, that of the *Cursor* (in which the first sign is of bloody rain) nor that of Chester (in which the first is of the rising sea) follows the letter or the order of the Erythræan Sibyl. The immediate source of

[1] *Gen. ad. Lit.*, IX. 13, Ungemach, p. 51.

[2] Quoted by Wright, *Chester Plays*, pp. 219–222.

St. Jerome's information was undoubtedly, as it was for St. Augustine, the famous Erythræan acrostic, lines 217–251 of the eighth book of the *Sibylline Oracles*. The content of these was of the signs that should precede the Judgment; the initials of the lines, however, spelled ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΧΡΣΙΤΟΣ ΘΕΟΥ ΥΙΟΣ ΣΩΤΗΡ ΣΤΑΥΡΟΣ. A Latin rendering with the last seven lines omitted, and still preserving the acrostic of the rest, is given by St. Augustine in his chapter on the Erythræan Sibyl[1]: Jēsus C(h)reistos, T(h)eou Uios, Sōtēr; and he points out that the first letters of these words, form the Greek *ἰχθύς*, or *fish*, — a symbol of the Christ among the Christians of the first centuries. These Sibylline lines were written by a Christian of the second century after Christ. But they are based upon similar prophecies written much earlier. One of them appears in the third book of the *Oracles*, lines 796–808, the production of an Alexandrian Jew who, somewhere between 170 and 140 B. C., is foretelling the signs that shall herald the end of things. Another is to be found in the *Book of Jubilees*, twenty-third chapter.[2] It recites not exactly the same judgments, to be sure, as those of the Christian Sibyl, the Chester Play, or the *Cursor;* but the judgments are *fifteen* in number. This book was written originally in Hebrew about 135–105 B. C. Since Jerome frequently quotes the *Book of Jubilees*, I incline to think that this is his "Book of Hebrew."

The meeting of Octavian and the Sibyl (Chester *Nativity*) is dramatised in the *Mystère du Viel Testament*, as well; and is traceable to the chapter on the Nativity of our Lord in the *Legenda Aurea;* as is the miracle of the fall of the Temple of Peace which precedes the Octavian episode in the Chester.

The N-Town, or so-called *Ludus Coventriæ*,[3] contains forty-two plays. Ungemach points out[4] that the plays dealing with Old Testament subjects are as near as those of Chester in their resemblance to the *Mystère du Viel Testament*. He thinks that

[1] *City of God*, XVIII. 23.

[2] Verses 11, 13.

[3] Edited by Halliwell, 1841, *Shakespeare Society*.

[4] *Quellen, Ch. Plays*, 86, 194.

both these English cycles derive in some measure from the same, or a closely identical, French source which stands historically between the *Représentation d'Adam* of the twelfth century and the *Viel Testament*, *Passion*, etc., compiled in the fifteenth. In other respects the N-Town series would appear to depend largely upon the Vulgate, and the apocryphal Gospels, especially the *Birth of Mary*, the *Protevangel of James*, and the *Nicodemus*. In the *Barrenness of Anna* the disposal of the curate's income is from the *Birth of Mary*, I. 3; *Mary in the Temple* is from the same source. Dr. Ward has called attention to the frequent use, also, of the liturgy, of hymns and psalms, and scriptural paraphrases. The scene of Lamech killing Cain occurs also in the Cornish cycle, and is fully dramatised in the play *Du desespoir Cain et de Lameth qui le tua* of the *Viel Testament*. It has its origin, of course, in the account to be found in Genesis, but the N-Town dramatist may have derived the elaborated story from one of many mediæval sources: the *Legenda Aurea*, Trevisa's translation of the *Polychronicon*, Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*. The details had been material of English tradition from the time of the middle English *Genesis*; and are ultimately derived from the *Book of Adam*. For an exhaustive study of this and other legends of Cain the reader should turn to Professor Emerson's treatise upon the subject.[3] In the play of *Mary's Betrothment* the author has apparently dispensed with intermediary legends, and drawn his material from the *Pseudo-Matthew*, for there alone could he have found the names of the virgins who waited upon Mary. Also from that source, and from the *Protevangel of James* came the *Trial of Joseph and Mary*. The incident of Veronica wiping the face of the Saviour "with her kerchy" in the play of the *Crucifixion* was material of common tradition in the early and middle ages. It may be traced from the *Golden Legend* back to the apocryphal *Death of Pilate*.

That the *Golden Legend* is one of the chief sources of this cycle is particularly evident in the case of the play of *The Assumption of the Virgin*. The subject finds dramatisation in the York

[1] Oliver F. Emerson, *Legends of Cain*; *Publications of Mod. Lang. Ass'n*, Dec. 1906, p. 874.

cycle as well; but there the authority seems to be the apocryphal *Transitus Mariae* direct. At first the N-Town play with its successive episodes of wonder seemed to me to follow the similarly vivid narrative of the *Cursor Mundi;* but an examination of the *Golden Legend* (*Assumption*), to which, in the opening stanza, the officiating "Doctor" expressly refers, shows that not only the incidents, but their order and detail, the exact phraseology of the conversations, the Latin chants, and the authorities quoted, are practically a transcript from Caxton's translation of the *Legenda.* The play, which is itself written in a more recent hand than the rest of the cycle, must therefore have been composed after 1483. It is interesting to note that the N-Town "Doctor" takes pains to inform us, in the words of Caxton, that this story which is assigned to "Seynt Ihon, the Evangelist" is "in a book clepid *Apocriphun.*" The *Transitus Mariae* is, of course, intended. Another account is given in the *Cursor Mundi;* but it varies greatly in details, and, as Dr Hænisch has shown, is an independent translation into Northern English of an *Assumption* written in the South-English dialect by one Edmund of Pontenay.

The York plays are forty-eight in number. Miss Lucy Toulmin Smith tells us that "the cycle offers a closer parallel to the *Cursor Mundi* than any of the other collections: first, because it is more perfect and comprehensive; secondly, because it is free from much of the jocularity and popular incident which were introduced into the Towneley and Coventry plays." She says also that the York plays "take up the course of the biblical history, more especially of the New Testament, on the same model." It is, indeed, likely that in general the design of the York cycle was influenced by the example of the *Cursor*, and it is the most comprehensive of the cycles; but in the use of legendary materials it does not offer any closer parallel to the *Cursor* than either the Cornish or the Coventry (*N-Town*) plays; nor in sobriety of manner does it surpass the Cornish, N-Town or Chester. The York plays are distinguished by their creative power. Naturally they depend upon the accepted biblical

sources, and such apocryphal as are in use in the other collections: *The Pseudo-Matthew*, the *Protevangel*, the *Gospel of the Birth of Mary*, both parts of *Nicodemus* (the Acts of Pilate and the Descent to Hell) and the *Transitus Mariae*;[1] but it is impossible to discover the slavish dependence upon traditional ecclesiastical histories, such as the *Historia Scholastica*, and the affiliation with continental mysteries which characterise some other cycles. The York dramatists — especially the two to whom we owe the middle and later stages of its production — were imaginatively independent, artistically equipped far beyond the measure of the compilers of Cornwall and Chester; far beyond the measure of the leading poet of the N-Town, as well. That romancer, while he perceived both the pathos and the humour of the material at hand, had neither the creative power nor the metrical skill to improve his opportunity. These the masters of York emphatically had. And it was from York that the genius of Wakefield took his cue.

In *The Creation and the Fall of Lucifer* the sources are somewhat as in Chester. The *Expulsion from Eden* suggests kinship with the *Représentation d'Adam*. The sequence in the play of the *Flood*, relative to the appearance of the rainbow and the prophecy of the catastrophic world-fire may have arisen from a reading of Comestor, who himself derives from St. Augustine;[2] so also the misquoted prophecy of Habakkuk,

> He saide oure Savyoure shall be sene
> Betwenē bestis lye,

for both the *Historia Scholastica* and the York *Birth of Jesus* (XIV) read Habakkuk iii, 2, as if the Vulgate ran *in medio animalium*, or as Comestor has it *in medio duorum animalium* "between two beasts;" whereas the original runs, "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years (*in medio annorum*) make known." But I am not

[1] Lucy Toulmin Smith, *York Mystery Plays*, Introd., xlviii; Kamann, *Die Quellen der York-Spiele in Anglia*, X, 189–226.

[2] Ungemach, *Quellen*, p. 51.

convinced that the York dramatists were relying in these cases on more than the popular tradition. One of the few instances of a coincidence with the text of the *Cursor Mundi* concerns the blossoming of Joseph's rod when he is chosen to wed Mary. The source of this legend Miss Smith and Dr. A. W. Ward give up. It is found in the *Cursor*, line 10,774,

> *With leaf and flower they found it green:*
> A dove was fro heaven sent
> Light down and thereon leant.

The legendary source is the *Pseudo-Evangel of the Nativity of Mary*, v. 14–17; but it is not improbable that the York play derived its inspiration directly from the *Nativity of Our Lady* in the *Legenda Aurea*, which relates the manner of the marvel in detail.

The prophecies of the birth of Christ, contained in the York *Annunciation*, are derived as are those of all cycles indirectly from biblical sources, but effectively from the "pseudo-Augustinian *Sermo contra Judaeos, Paganos, et Arianos de Symbolo*, probably written in the sixth century, but ascribed throughout the middle ages to the great African." [1]

I have already made reference to Mr. W. A. Craigie's discovery of one [2] of the sources of Plays XXX, XXXIII, XXXVI, XXXVII, XXXVIII. From the northern middle English metrical version of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* undoubtedly came the immediate diction and to some extent the rhymes of such passages as the following: the beadle doing homage to Jesus (XXX, 306–319); the meaning of "Osanna" (XXX, 346); the bowing of the banners to Jesus (XXXIII, 169); the dream of Pilate's wife (XXXIII, 159, 177); the roster of the traducers of Jesus (XXXIII, 113); the testimony of Isaiah, Simeon, John the Baptist (XXXVII, 48–80); the account of the eclipse and earthquake (XXXVIII, 91–102). Play XXXVI, also, betrays one or two echoes of the metrical *Gospel*. In all of these cases the verbal borrowing is not from the Latin prose text of *Nicodemus*,

[1] Chambers: *Mediæval Stage*, II, 52.

[2] *The Gospel of Nicodemus and the York Mystery Plays*, in *Furn. Misc.*, p. 52.

though in general the playwright makes use of that version for the sequence of the story. The northern middle English metrical *Gospel* may be consulted in Horstmann's edition from the Harleian MS. 4196.[1] The manuscript is of the early fifteenth century, but the translation itself of the first half of the fourteenth.

The popular etymology of Pilate's name (XXX) from his "mother Pila the daughter of Atus" comes straight from the *Legenda Aurea*, — section on the Passion of Our Lord. The restoration of sight to Longeus by the blood from our Saviour's side appears in the *Cursor*, but is a common tradition of the middle ages.

The York Plays of *the Death, and the Assumption of Mary*, are based neither on the *Cursor* nor the *Legenda Aurea*, but, I think, on one of the middle English poems of the Assumption, or directly upon the *Transitus Mariae*. The *Coronation*, however, shows a closer resemblance to the *Cursor* and its incidental authority, the *Assumption* of Edmund of Pontenay, for in both of these occurs the line (York XLVII, 156): "There I am king, thou shalt be queen," and the explicit statement that Mary "was crownèd queen of heaven." The power to mediate in prayer accorded to the Virgin in the York play of her *Death*, is also common to the *Cursor* and its source, but is not emphasised in the N-Town *Assumption* and the *Assumption* of the *Legenda Aurea*. The story of the Appearance of our Lady to Thomas which is the subject of the unique York XLVI is not given in the *Cursor;* it appears however in the middle English poems of the Assumption, is referred to as "apocryphum" in the *Legenda Aurea*, and derives from the common Latin source, the *Transitus*.

There are thirty plays in the Wakefield or so-called Towneley cycle.[2] Except in the case of the legend of Judas, of which we find a fragment at the end of the collection, I doubt whether the

[1] *Herrig's Archiv*, LIII, 1874.

[2] Towneley Plays: the texts are Raine's of 1836, *Surtees Society*, III; and England and Pollard's, 1897, *E. E. T. S.*, Extra Series, LXXI.

sources vary from those of York. Of that legend and its history I have said something under the history of the Rood-Tree.

Miss Lucy Toulmin Smith has pointed out, in her excellent edition of the York Mystery Plays, that five of them were in whole or in large part borrowed by the cycle of Wakefield. These plays in the Wakefield are VIII, *Pharaoh*, XVIII, *The Doctors*, XXV, *The Extraccio Animarum*, XXVI, *The Resurrection*, and XXX, *The Judgment*.[1] In each case of such indebtedness the omissions, variations, and additions in the Wakefield would indicate that the borrowing was made not from the manuscript of the original, but from memory,—probably of craftsmen who had taken part in the acting of the York cycle.

An especially interesting example of such interurban transmission of plays is furnished by the relation between the York, Wakefield, and Chester versions of the episode of *Christ with the Doctors in the Temple*. The original of the series is the York XX. Of this the Wakefield *Doctors* (XVIII) has reproduced apparently from memory but with a commendable accuracy of phrase, sequence, and stanza, all from line 73 to the end, line 288. The errors that creep in are just sufficient to show that Wakefield is the borrower. The Chester play, on the other hand (Part II of No. XI), is but a reminiscent jumble of the York. Into an older play of the well-known Chester stanzaic form (aaabaaab) the copyist has interpolated, from the York original, entirely different stanzas, and has disarranged phrases, verses, and stanzas in the process. That the borrowing is direct and not by way of Wakefield is proved by the fact that occasionally where Wakefield has deviated, Chester has succeeded in recollecting aright the words of their common source.

Beside these larger borrowings from the York cycle I have noticed several of more limited amount.[2] In the Wakefield *Magi*, for instance, stanza 100 is from the York *Adoration*, stanza 27; in the Wakefield *Flight into Egypt* there are some

[1] From York XI, XX, XXXVII, XXXVIII, XLVIII, respectively.

[2] For the indebtedness of Wakefield to York, see also Hohlfeld, *Die altengl. Kollectivmysterien* (*Anglia* XI); Pollard, *Introduction* to *Towneley Plays*; Bunzen, *Kritik d. Wakefield Mysterien*, Kiel, 1903.

thirty distinct echoes of the corresponding play of York. In the Wakefield play of *The Scourging* the scene of John and the Holy Women is based upon the second scene of the York *Christ Led up to Calvary;* it even preserves for us portions that are missing from the York manuscript, and have been regarded as lost.[1] The Wakefield play of the *Purification* is at any rate a reminiscence of the York scene at Simeon's house in Jerusalem (XLI). I have no hesitation in saying that also the scene between Mary Magdalene and Jesus at the end of the Wakefield *Resurrection*, and the succeeding Wakefield play of *The Pilgrims*, are fairly accurate survivals of discarded York plays. For they are evident continuations, in the same phrase and metre, of the simple play of the *Resurrection*, which is directly derived from the existing play of York; whereas the surviving York plays of *Jesus and the Magdalene* (XXXIX), and of *The Pilgrims to Emmaus* (XI), are in a much more modern, alliterative style, and in a different metre. The manuscript of the latter, indeed, contains, after the first few lines, the Latin statement twice repeated, "This is of a new make." In this same stanzaic form (aaabab), and in the earlier style of York, is written also the fragment on the *Hanging of Judas* (*Suspencio Judæ*), which closes the Wakefield collection. Since a distinct play of that name, in which Judas hangs himself and bursts asunder in the middle, appears in a list of York plays, prepared about 1415 by Roger Burton, the town-clerk, it is very probable that the surviving Wakefield stanzas of the play are a relic of that original. To another passage in this York metre, preserved by the Wakefield borrower, but missing in the York manuscript, attention was called some years ago by Mr. Pollard. This is the famous monologue of the risen Christ, Play XXVI, beginning with line 226:

> Erthly man, that I have wroght,
> Wightly wake, and slepe thou noght!

[1] Wakefield stanzas 28, 29, are York 10, 12. W. 30–34 represent the lost Y. 14–18. W. 35–42 are either an insertion or a copy of some older discarded play of York. W. 42–48 closely follow Y. 21–29.

With bytter bayll I have thee boght,
To make thee free
Into this dongeon depe I soght
And all for love of thee.

This exquisite and pathetic plea occupies some hundred lines of the Wakefield *Resurrection*. It is impossible to suppose that the author of the York original could have foregone the opportunity for such a speech; or that the speech, as preserved in the Wakefield copy, and in the same phrase and stanzaic form, should not be that of the York original. Chester, also, retains a reminiscence of this tender poem, but, as usual with Chester, in a clumsy paraphrase. An earlier form of the monologue is to be found in the middle English *Harrowing of Hell*, where "Dominus" begins, "Hardè gatès have I gone." The N-Town *Resurrection* Play opens the plaint of Jesus with these words, and contains three or four other parallel expressions. The Wakefield monologue, on the other hand (or its original of York), bears a closer resemblance to the famous Discourse between Christ and Man in the *Cursor Mundi* (lines 17,113–17,189), where appear not only the same refrains, "Sinful man that by me goes," "Sinful man for love of thee," etc., but frequently identical thoughts, words, and rhymes in like sequence.

Of the contents of the four Cornish plays something has already been said. The *Origo Mundi* follows in some respects the *Cursor Mundi* account of Seth and the history of the Cross-Wood; in others, it certainly borrows from the *Latin Legend*, or some of the early English narratives based upon it. The Maximilla episode differs somewhat from that in the *Cursor* and the twelfth[1] and fourteenth[2] century Latin versions. It more closely resembles a middle English, Northumbrian *Story of the Holy Rood*,[3] which used as its sources both the original *Latin Legend* and the Latin *Life of Adam and Eve*. The story, in the

[1] Cambridge Univ. Libr. Napier, *Holy Rood-Tree*, 41.
[2] *Harl. MS.*, 3185; Napier, 54.
[3] *Harl. MS.*, 4196; Morris, *E. E. T. S.*, 46.

Cornish *Passio Domini*, of how the smith refused to make the nails for the Rood, and pleaded a sore hand which, by a miracle, was made to look injured; and of how his wife would not credit his excuse, and made the nails herself, is also found in the Northumbrian, but not in other English, versions. The Rood story, the Harrowing of Hell, — the episodes of Longinus, Joseph of Arimathea, etc., as given in the *Resurrection of our Lord*, — derive from the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and other sources, as stated elsewhere in this book. The story of Veronica, and of her part in the condemnation of Pilate, his suicide, and of how the river Tiber refused to hold him, is based upon the *Legenda Aurea* (The Passion of our Lord), or directly upon its source, the apocryphal *Death of Pilate*, a mediæval Latin production. In the choice and handling of incidents the Cornish plays bear closer resemblance to the (Coventry) N-Town than to other cycles.[1]

B. The Advertisement of Levity

Though the miracles were amusing sometimes by themselves, sometimes by virtue of adventitious episodes, they nowhere, so far as I remember, make profession of a comic intent. In the allegorical dramas, however, the interludes, and earlier comedies, so called, the purpose to delight by means of mirth pervades frequently not only the play itself, but prologue and epilogue, and the advertisement upon the title-page as well. Of these, the prologue and epilogue generally speak the policy of the author; the advertisement, that of the publisher. It was but gradually that the begetter made bold to promise merriment, and that comedy came to mean what now it does.

As early as the first half of the fifteenth century, the prologue of the *Pride of Life* promises us a "spelle of mirth" as well

[1] The Cornish text of the *Origo*, *Passio*, and *Resurrexio* is given with an English translation, by Edwin Norris, in *The Ancient Cornish Drama*, 2 vols., 1859. The Cornish text of Jordan's *Creation of the World* (1611) is given with Keigwyn's translation, in an edition by Davies Gilbert, 1827; also with translation by Whitley Stokes, 1863, in *Transactions of Philological Society*.

as of care. Of the former, however, it gives us but little; whereas *Mankind*, of the second half of the century, although it makes no promise, for the title-page is lost, affords us mirth in considerable quantity. *Wisdom* makes no profession; nor does *Nature*, nor *Mundus et Infans*, all written before 1500. But the two latter, when printed some decades later, were advertised as interludes goodly, proper, and new. There is more or less fun provided in all of them. The *Nigramansir*, 1504, called itself both moral and pithy, and, if we may trust Warton's account, the play was both sententious and entertaining. It is, however, not until between 1515 and 1523 that we encounter plays bold enough to advertise their levity. The first of these were *Magnificence* and *The Four Elements*, both of which promise to be "mery." The Messenger of the *Elements*, also, justifies the dramatist:

> But because some folk be little disposed
> To sadness but more to mirth and sport,
> This philosophical work is mixed
> With merry conceits to give men comfort.

And this is perhaps the first explicit utterance of the *utile dulci* to be found in the text of an English drama.

Every one knows that Chaucer had much earlier used the word "comedy," just as had Dante and others before him, to indicate any poetic narrative whose opening was sad or serious and whose end was happy; the opposite, in fact, of a tale like *Troilus and Creseide*, which was called a tragedy because "a dite of a prosperitie for a time that endith in wretchednesse." But of the term "comedy" as comic drama in the classical sense, we find no employment in England before 1386; of that date there is an entry in a Cambridge expense book *pro pallio brusdato et pro sex larvis et barbis in comoedia*,[1] — which savours of Plautus or Terence. It is, to be sure, conjectured that the Latin elegiac "comoedia" of *Babio* was written by an Englishman, and that as early as the twelfth or thirteenth century; but though such responsive declamations in dramatic form undoubtedly existed in monastery and school at an early date we have

[1] *Retrospective Review*, 1825, XII, 7, and Creizenach, p. 454 *n.*

but scant evidence of their influence upon the art or its nomenclature.

We next encounter the term in the case of the "goodly Comedy" of Plautus that was played before King Henry at Greenwich in 1520. That this signification of comedy was well understood by 1530 is proved by the use of the word in the prologue and epilogue of the English translation of "that lytill comedy" the *Andria* of Terence. In 1531 when Sir Thomas Elyot deems it necessary to defend "comedy" against the charge of ribaldry, he thinks of the species in its Latin sense, though he uses the term synonymously with "enterludes in Englisshe." Says he, "They be undoubtedly a picture or, as it were, a mirrour of man's life, wherein ivell is not taught but discovered; to the intent that men beholdynge the promptness of youth unto vice, the snares of harlotts and baudes laide for yonge mindes, the disceipte of servantes, the chaunces of fortune, — contrary to mennes expectation, they, being thereof warned, may prepare them selfe to resist or prevent occasion." The apology emphasizes rather than refutes the charge of merriment if not of license. It was about this time that "comedy" began also to be used for interludes of all possible kinds, — a fact that I have elsewhere mentioned. Consequently, from 1530 to 1581, plays as different as the *Calisto*, the *Johan Baptystes*, *Tyde Taryeth no Man*, *the Longer thou Livest the More Foole thou Art*, *All for Money*, and the *Conflict of Conscience* display without hesitation this same seductive sign, which, inferentially, connoted not much more than an advertisement of wares. But good wine needs no distinctive bush; and the qualities that we attribute to comedy are, from 1530 on, found under the name of "mery play" or "enterlude" as frequently as under the more ostentatious designation. Such, for instance, is the case with Heywood's farces and the *Thersytes*. On the other hand, a more explicit profession of comic intent is made by *Roister Doister*, *Jack Juggler* and *Tom Tyler*, the composition and publication of which fall between 1545 and 1563. Of these the first is, according to its prologue, a "comedie or enterlude" presenting mirth with wisdom, like the "merrie comedies" of Plautus and Terence.

The second, according to its title of 1562–63, is an "enterlued . . . both wytte and very playsent," and by its prologue, perhaps of 1554, it promises to interpose "*tuis interdum gaudia curis.*" With "Cicero Tullius" it commends the "old comedy," and in so doing commends itself. As I have elsewhere said, this "enterlued" is a very clever controversial satire as well. What the original title page of *Tom Tyler* advertised, we don't know, but the Prologue comes before us

> . . . to make report
> That after me you shall have merry sport,

while the concluding song teaches that marriage is a lottery,

> These checks of chaunce can no man flie
> But God himself that rules the skie.

In short, the profession is of the *utile dulci*. From 1550 on, an increased number of interludes, such as *Respublica* and the *Disobedient Child*, take pains to announce themselves as "pretie" or "mery" or both; sometimes "frutefull" as well. It may, however, be said that by 1566, when Gascoigne's *Supposes* was printed, the name "comedy" in its modern acceptation was usurping the place of synonymous designations for the type. The *Supposes* is plain "comedy" on the title-page, "comedy" in the prologue, "comedy" under the *dramatis personæ;* and this comedy is written — without explanation or apology — to give "cause of delight." Edwardes indeed, about 1564–66, in his prologue to *Damon and Pithias*, which he called both "commedie" and "tragicall commedie," pretends to write no more "In commycall wise, —

> . . . and dares avouche
> In commedies the greatest skyll is this, lightly to touch
> All thynges to the quicke; and eke to frame each person so
> That by his common talke, you may his nature rightly know."

The sobriety is a ruse; the play has its *quantum* of "sportes" and of personal satire as well, and is properly entitled by the

printer in 1571 "an excellent comedie." The *Jacob and Esau* thinks it necessary, in 1568, to enhance its designation "comedie or enterlude" with the protestation "newe, mery and wittie;" but that, I suppose, was intended to offset the scriptural appearance of the subject. The term is again broadened by the epithet "tragicall" in the title of *Apius and Virginia*, 1575; and it is modified by "pleasaunt" in the registration of *Common Conditions*, 1576. The title-page of *Gammer Gurton*, printed, at the latest, 1575, reverts still more decidedly to the ancient style of adjectival qualification, but maybe this title-page was prepared several years before it was used; the play itself, written as early as 1554, is as "mery" at its "last endyng" as at its first. From about 1560 on, authors and printers rarely apologise for mirth; when "comedy" does not stand for merriment alone, it portrays, as in the case of the decidedly sombre *Conflict of Conscience*, typical characters and faults intermixed with "some honest mirth . . . to refresh the minds of them that be the auditors."

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